

ULSTER'S CRUCIAL WEEKEND

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THE INDEPENDENT

Monday 20 April 1998 45p (R50p) No 3,589

Fees forcing young to quit education

By Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

THE proportion of 18-year-olds going to university is set to drop for the first time in 20 years as tuition fees come in, the Government's own figures have revealed.

The new statistics from the Department for Education and Employment predict that just 30 per cent of school leavers will go into higher education this autumn compared with 34 per cent last year. Meanwhile, overall numbers could be boosted by an extra 13,000 part-time students and an extra 7,000 from overseas.

The revelation has provoked new claims that many 18-year-olds have been put off going to university this year because they will have to repay part of their fees after they graduate.

A spokeswoman for David Blunkett, the Secretary of State for Education, dismissed the figures as "highly provisional". They showed a fall in the number of 18-year-olds predicted to go to university, she said.

Even so, the annual report of the department reveals that ministers are facing a dilemma. Mr Blunkett has told MPs that 35 per cent of young people will go to university by 2002, while Tony Blair has promised an extra 500,000 places.

The number of places will rise this year but increasing numbers of mature and part-time students will take up far more of the extra space than

traditional university entrants. Last month, an extra 5,440 full-time places were announced, but more than half of them were for so-called sub-degree higher national diploma courses, most of which will be taught in further education colleges.

The department spokeswoman said: "Officials tell me that the number of young students who will take up places is highly uncertain. Although the figures are there they are very provisional. We wanted to give a general indication of what is happening, and we wanted to keep at a level of one in three."

Douglas Trainer, president of the National Union of Students, said that the abolition of fee payments in Ireland and the economic crisis in the Far East could hit the numbers coming in from abroad.

"This confirms our worst fears that fees will deter British students. We think there is going to be a massive shortfall in the number of people taking up places in September," he said.

A spokesman for the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals said it had asked for an explanation of Mr Blunkett's thinking on the subject. His promise on numbers to the Commons Select Committee on Education and Employment had not been repeated in a recent Green Paper on lifelong learning, he said. The committee welcomed last month's easing of the cap on student numbers.

"We hope this will mean the removal of all state controls on

student numbers which have for too long inhibited the sector's ability to respond fully to student demand," he said.

The latest figures from the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (Ucas) showed applications down 4 per cent on the previous year.

A further factor is making Mr Blunkett's pledge, given to the committee of MPs last September, even more difficult to fulfil. The number of 18-year-olds is rising, from 605,000 last year to 624,000 this year.

In a report on the future of higher education last year Sir Ron Dearing, now Lord Dearing, suggested that 45 per cent of the population should go to university. But in future, it seems the standard measure showing the proportion of 18-year-olds at university could become increasingly irrelevant.

Although DfEE predictions of student numbers used to show projections two years ahead, this year's figures only show one year ahead. So it is harder to know whether officials believe the Government's target can be met.

Despite a cap on student numbers in recent years, recruitment has continued to creep up. This year 34 per cent of the age group are at university, compared with 33 per cent last year and 32 per cent the year before. The last time that the proportion dropped was in 1978, when 12 per cent were at university compared with 13 per cent the previous year.

Linda McCartney dies, aged 56



Linda McCartney, above, wife of ex-Beatle Paul, has died aged 56. McCartney's spokesman Geoff Baker said last night. She died on Friday at Santa Barbara on the west coast of the United States with her husband at her bedside, said Mr Baker. Last night McCartney issued a statement asking that any people wishing to give flowers should instead take up vegetarianism - an issue fervently supported by his wife.

The couple had announced in December 1995 that Linda was suffering from breast cancer and she had been having treatment.

A spokesman for the McCartney family said: "The blessing was that the end came quickly and she didn't suffer."

Euro set to replace dollar as the world's top currency

By Diane Coyle
and Fran Abrams

THE EURO will rival or even overtake the dollar under monetary union, according to a new report. And the currency is much more likely to achieve supremacy in the global financial markets if Britain joins, it adds.

The finding, by the Centre for Economic Policy Research (CEPR), will place renewed pressure on the Government to take the plunge.

European consumers will benefit from high exchange rates against the dollar, the yen and other currencies, the report says. That will make goods imported from elsewhere in the world much cheaper.

The euro will also prove a convenient currency for tourists and businessmen, and, presumably, the international criminal community, travelling abroad.

Nor will it necessarily be bad for European exporters. With their home currency predominant in the financial markets, it should reduce costs for anybody doing business overseas. About half of European Union trade takes place within the Union in any case, and will become immune to exchange-rate shifts from next year.

The CEPR, an international think-tank for academic economists, has published its report with two Continental counterparts. It says the euro will prove much more attractive to international investors than the sum of its national parts.

The currency will at least rival the US dollar in status and

could easily overtake it, according to the authors, Richard Portes and Hélène Rey of the London Business School and London School of Economics.

"This is all the more likely if the UK joins Emu, because of the size of the UK financial market," they write.

Last night, Giles Radice, chairman of the House of Commons Treasury Select Committee, said it was time to inform the public about the euro. The European Movement, of which he is also chairman, is to offer information packs to all members of the public who want them.

"Membership of a soundly based euro could bring significant benefits to Britain. That's why we need to get on with the job of informing the British public about the single currency and the merits of joining sooner rather than later," he said.

John Redwood, the Eurosceptic Conservative trade and industry spokesman, said the report was "pie in the sky", adding: "If Britain joined in the first wave it would greatly increase the risks of the thing miscarrying."

The first-wave membership of Emu is to be decided formally at a special summit in Brussels at the beginning of May. Eleven countries are expected to join in this wave. Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, has said Britain will prepare in any case, and, subject to the right economic conditions and a referendum, could join early in the next parliament.

EMU: Prospects and Challenges for the Euro, Blackwell Publishers for CEPR, £39.50. Ministers' battle, page 18

After Ulster, Blair breaks Mid East logjam

By Anthony Bevins
in Jerusalem

THE SURPRISE chance of a dramatic breakthrough in the Middle East peace process came last night after Tony Blair and Benjamin Netanyahu held a 75-minute meeting in Jerusalem.

On the last leg of a whirlwind tour through the Middle East, and fresh from his success in Northern Ireland, Mr Blair appeared last night with Mr Netanyahu at a joint press conference where Mr Ne-

tanyahu said that for the first time in more than a year there was a chance of breaking the logjam which has held up the peace process.

He also said he was willing to go anywhere any time to hold talks on the American peace proposals - possibly to London to try to advance the process.

Mr Blair said that Mr Netanyahu had offered to go abroad - destination unspecified - "within the next month".

But Mr Blair also said: "It is far too early to talk of breakthroughs. But I think it is im-

portant that if people want there to be a breakthrough, I think that is the first step, and I also believe that here is a situation in which, if that willingness really exists, then progress can be made."

At that point, however, Mr Blair injected a note of caution. "People will want to see it backed up with concrete steps. I mean, it's not enough for us simply to talk the language of wanting to agree. There has to be concrete proposals that flow from that - otherwise it has no credibility."

The dramatic Jerusalem breakthrough followed Mr Blair's patient diplomatic progress from Egypt through to Saudi Arabia and Jordan.

After talks with King Hussein of Jordan yesterday, Mr Blair said that the best security for Israel would be offered by a peace that worked. King Hussein said he saw the Northern Ireland deal as a good omen. He said the Middle East process could be saved - "or else we will be plunged into a very dark and very dangerous period".

As Mr Blair left Amman yesterday afternoon, he was joined on his RAF VC10 by Miguel Moratinos, the European envoy, who reported to the Prime Minister that there had been a distinct "improvement in the atmosphere" in Israel.

If Israel is now willing to move on the American peace proposals - thus far kept secret - Mr Blair would certainly be willing to offer London as a venue for talks in which the Americans would take a lead.

Given that President Clinton is already scheduled to visit Birmingham for a meeting of the Group of Eight industrialised countries in the middle of next month, they could use that opportunity to make a start on a peace that has been stalled ever since Mr Netanyahu became prime minister.

Yesterday, before he joined Mr Netanyahu for his talks Mr Blair and Cherie Blair had paid an emotion-packed visit to Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial, where Mr Blair had issued a direct appeal to the people and the leaders of Israel.

Plea at Yad Vashem: page 9

US hospital refused to help British girl who broke her arm



Charlotte Owen, 28, who was treated for a broken arm

By Jeremy Laurence
Health Editor

A FOUR-year-old British girl who required urgent surgery for a badly broken arm while on holiday in the US was turned away from a major hospital because her mother could not pay \$7,500 (£4,400).

After four days in which Kate Owen and her daughter, Charlotte, were plunged into a Kafkaesque nightmare involving suitcases of money and a wall of bureaucracy, they made a 3,000 mile dash across the Atlantic for an emergency operation at University College hospital in London.

According to Ms Owen, the London surgeon who treated Charlotte was shocked that such a severe injury had been left untreated by the Americans. Charlotte had tripped on some stairs falling awkwardly on her arm and the top of the radius - the growing point at the elbow - had snapped. An operation was

required to reposition it to ensure her arm grew normally.

"The surgeon said he had never seen an injury like it and was disgusted it had been left. There was no guarantee Charlotte's arm would grow normally after such a delay and if it didn't it would be left deformed. He said if it had been an American child who had had an accident in Britain they would have operated without question."

Ms Owen, a 28-year-old single mother, had taken Charlotte to visit her grandfather who teaches at Harvard University last February. The fall happened on a Monday and an x-ray at the local hospital revealed a serious break. Charlotte was referred to the Massachusetts General, a major teaching hospital in Boston with an international reputation, where an appointment was made for the following morning, Tuesday. An orthopaedic surgeon said he would operate the next day.

On the Wednesday morning, Ms

Owen was preparing to take Charlotte for the operation when the phone rang. It was the hospital calling to remind her to bring \$7,500 as a deposit. Kate was poleaxed.

"Who has that kind of cash? They were saying it was an emergency but they wouldn't do the op until I came up with the money. I said I couldn't pay and they put the phone down. Then they called back and said they took credit cards. I told the surgeon and the hospital administrator it was outrageous to put money above a child's health. The operation was cancelled."

She has received a bill from the local hospital where Charlotte was first taken of \$134 for the x-ray plus \$447 for the doctor to read it. The total charge, including a soft plaster and sling for Charlotte's arm, came to almost \$700. Had she had surgery in the US the cost would have been over \$10,000.

Requests for a comment from the Massachusetts General hospital received no response.

Today's news

Ulster's reform

THE two most important leaders on either side of Ulster's politics said that the political debate had changed irredeemably. Page 2

Downs plea fails

A CAMPAIGN to make the South Downs the next national park has failed. Page 5

Kidnap family

DIPLOMATS in Yemen were awaiting the demands of kidnappers who snatched a British family. Page 6



TOMORROW

■ Too much fibre—when healthy eating can do you harm

■ Diana, role model for the Bridget Jones generation, by Oliver James

■ Reggae gets spiritual—How the music of the ghetto is going soft



■ World Cup countdown— we visit the England training camp

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Recycled paper made up of 41.4% of the raw material for UK newspapers in the first half of 1997.

Ulster leaders see bridge over political divide

By David McKittrick and Alan Murdoch

THE two most important leaders on either side of the political divide in Northern Ireland yesterday said the nature of the political debate had begun to change irredeemably.

Ulster Unionist leader David Trimble, fresh from his triumph on Saturday of winning party endorsement for the Good Friday agreement, said he believed Northern Ireland was finally emerging from its nightmare of violence.

Meanwhile Gerry Adams, president of Sinn Féin, told party members in Dublin: "We have changed the landscape of Irish politics and we have not finished yet." He added: "Our business is the business of revolution, of national reunification and of building a real democracy in this island."

Mr Trimble has just over a month to campaign for a Yes vote in the 22 May referendums on the agreement. On Saturday he scored a striking success when the Ulster Unionist Council, his party's 800-strong ruling body, approved the agreement by 540 to 210, an endorsement by 72 per cent.

The result dispelled wor-

ries that the anti-agreement lobby, spearheaded by senior Unionist MPs, might be gaining ground following the rejection of the deal by the Orange Order.

Mr Trimble told ITV's *Dimbleby* programme: "This community is actually slowly coming out of what has been a nightmare for the past 25 years. I never thought the process was going to be smooth, but one way or another we are going to get it right."

An opinion poll published at the weekend by Dublin's *Sunday Independent* showed that a large number of Protestants, 42 per cent, said they were undecided about how to vote in the referendums. 34 per cent intended to vote for while 22 per cent said they would vote against.

Sinn Féin's leadership told its members not to be afraid of democratic challenges ahead, but in return received warnings from delegates that entering a Northern Ireland Assembly could lead to political self destruction.

In an impassioned debate at its annual conference in Dublin, the 1,400 delegates deferred their final decision on the Northern Ireland agree-

ment until a further conference within a month.

Party leaders signalled that Sinn Féin's decision on the agreement is unlikely to be clear cut, carefully leaving room for partial dissent, as when it responded to the Downing Street Declaration at a conference in Donegal in 1994.

Mr Adams said delegates should selectively endorse those parts of the agreement advancing republican objectives. He also sought to diffuse unionist suspicion of dealings with Republicans. "We have no wish to make you second class citizens in the land of your birth." It was vital, he said, that Unionists "are not forced to occupy the political space that we're escaping from."

Chief negotiator Martin McGuinness urged delegates to see the agreement as a working accommodation in a transitional period.

He said: "It is a bit like a partner in a relationship saying the relationship is over, but that she/he is willing to wait until the children have grown up."

He insisted the union had been weakened by the document's clause subjecting it to the will of a Northern Ireland majority.



Lord Howell: Sport was love of his life

Politicians pay fond tribute to 'Mr Rainmaker'

By Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

TONY Blair led the tributes last night to the former Labour sports minister, Lord Howell, who died of a heart attack yesterday, aged 74.

Denis Howell, minister for sport between 1964 and 1970, also achieved notoriety as "Mr

Rainmaker" during the 1976 drought. His appointment to deal with the crisis was followed almost immediately by several days of torrential rain.

The former MP for Small Heath, who became a life peer in 1992, collapsed after making a speech at a charity event in aid of cancer research on Saturday evening.

Mr Blair, speaking as he left Jordan for Israel, said Lord Howell had been "a huge figure" in the Labour Party and in former Labour governments.

"I am deeply saddened by his death as will be his many friends, colleagues and admirers. He dedicated his life to furthering the interests of ordinary people, with whom he had a

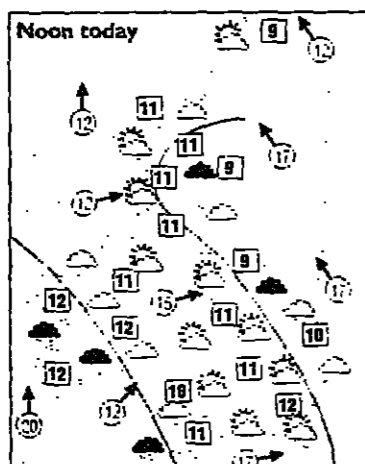
great affinity. They will remember him fondly," he said. Lord Hattersley, former deputy leader of the Labour Party and a fellow Birmingham MP from 1964 until 1992, said Lord Howell should be remembered principally for his role as a champion of sport.

"He was the great minister of sport, perhaps the only minister of sport we have had in the sense of a national figure... He was most famous for being the original, and the once and only, in my view, sports minister because he knew about sport, and he loved sport," he said.

Lord Hattersley said he would not remember Lord Howell as Mr Rainmaker. "But he was very proud of

that strange moment during the drought when he was asked to co-ordinate water supplies. He was a minister in the Department of the Environment, so it was his responsibility anyway. And suddenly the day or day after Denis took over it began to rain. Denis knew it was a joke, but it was a joke which he very much enjoyed."

WEATHER



Scotland will be cloudy with rain, although the far north will escape mainly dry. However, the rain will ease and start to peter out in most parts in the afternoon with some sunshine coming through in the west. Central, northern and eastern England will start dull with rain in places, but the rain will peter out with skies brightening and only a slight risk of a shower. Elsewhere there will be sunny spells and just the odd shower but rain will move into the south-west during the evening.

Outlook for the next few days
On Tuesday, western Scotland and Northern Ireland will be cloudy with rain but elsewhere it will be dull and dry with some sunny spells. There is the risk of rain in western Scotland and Northern Ireland on Wednesday but elsewhere the pleasant, summery weather will continue with plenty of warm sunshine. Thursday will be warm with plenty of sunshine in most parts but rain looks likely in the south and west on Friday.

British Isles weather

Forecast for the next 24 hours. Forecast for the next 24 hours. Forecast for the next 24 hours.

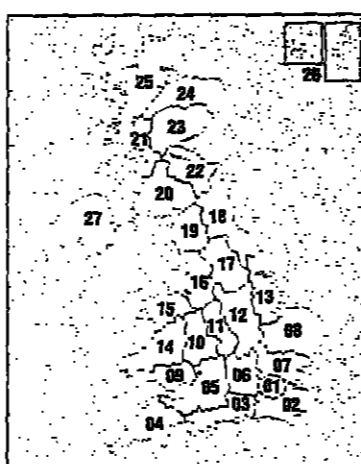
City	Temp	Wind	Cloud
Aberdeen	7-15	SW 10-15	Cloudy
Cardiff	9-15	SW 10-15	Cloudy
Edinburgh	7-15	SW 10-15	Cloudy
Glasgow	7-15	SW 10-15	Cloudy
London	9-15	SW 10-15	Cloudy
Manchester	9-15	SW 10-15	Cloudy
Newcastle	9-15	SW 10-15	Cloudy
Oxford	9-15	SW 10-15	Cloudy
Plymouth	9-15	SW 10-15	Cloudy
Scarborough	9-15	SW 10-15	Cloudy
Southampton	9-15	SW 10-15	Cloudy
Stirling	9-15	SW 10-15	Cloudy
Swansea	9-15	SW 10-15	Cloudy
Torquay	9-15	SW 10-15	Cloudy
Wrexham	9-15	SW 10-15	Cloudy

Air quality

City	Index	Category
London	2	Good
Manchester	2	Good
Newcastle	2	Good
Oxford	2	Good
Plymouth	2	Good
Scarborough	2	Good
Southampton	2	Good
Stirling	2	Good
Swansea	2	Good
Torquay	2	Good
Wrexham	2	Good

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High tides

Location	AM	PM
London	06:03	18:22
Liverpool	05:30	17:13
Aberdeen	12:44	12:18
Glasgow	06:30	18:22
Newcastle	06:22	18:14

Lighting-up times

City	30.06	06.06	12.06	18.06
London	20:14	05:57	12:00	20:06
Manchester	20:15	05:58	12:01	20:07
Newcastle	20:16	05:59	12:02	20:08

Sun & moon

City	Sun sets	Moon sets
London	20:06	02:55
Manchester	20:07	02:56
Newcastle	20:08	02:57

World weather

Forecast for the next 24 hours. Forecast for the next 24 hours. Forecast for the next 24 hours.

City	Temp	Wind	Cloud
Aberdeen	7-15	SW 10-15	Cloudy
Cardiff	9-15	SW 10-15	Cloudy
Edinburgh	7-15	SW 10-15	Cloudy
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Newcastle	9-15	SW 10-15	Cloudy
Oxford	9-15	SW 10-15	Cloudy
Plymouth	9-15	SW 10-15	Cloudy
Scarborough	9-15	SW 10-15	Cloudy
Southampton	9-15	SW 10-15	Cloudy
Stirling	9-15	SW 10-15	Cloudy
Swansea	9-15	SW 10-15	Cloudy
Torquay	9-15	SW 10-15	Cloudy
Wrexham	9-15	SW 10-15	Cloudy

Atlantic chart, noon today



Low & high water

City	Low	High
London	06:03	18:22
Liverpool	05:30	17:13
Aberdeen	12:44	12:18
Glasgow	06:30	18:22
Newcastle	06:22	18:14

MICHAEL HANLON WEATHER WISE

IT HAS been, so far, a record-breaking year for weather. January 1998 saw record-breaking gales in the south-west of England, followed by record-breaking tornadoes along the Sussex coast. Then in February we had record-breaking temperatures all over the country. On the 13th, Barbourne in Worcestershire raised 19.7C, an all-time record for the month. February was also one of the driest on record in some parts of the country. March, though, was not so spectacular, recording almost record-breaking average weather for much of the month, but made up for it at the end with record-breaking warm nights at Heathrow. And, as for April, well, the Midlands have seen record-breaking floods, probably the worst for a century.

Oh, and last week we had record-breaking snow over the Home Counties. So what is going on? Is all this record breaking an indication that our previously benign climate has plunged into chaos, veering from heat wave to deluge and back again via tornado and blizzard? Of course not. The problem lies with the term "record breaking". There are a great many weather variables - wind-speed, temperature, sunshine, rainfall and so on - which can be quantified. And there are a great many places in which they are measured. And it is not all that many years since all this measuring began. So, it is easy to see how any particular day is quite likely to produce a "record", particularly if you add a timeclock. "Warmest February day in Glasgow for 50 years", "wettest March afternoon in Stratford since 1907", "windiest January in Penzance since the war" - these are the sort of records that will be broken, somewhere, every week or so, and should not, on their own, be taken as an indication that something big and worrying is happening to our weather.

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مکان الامین

Scottish night out at Bafta

By Paul McCann

IT WAS a Scottish night at the Bafta ceremony last night when Sean Connery was awarded the academy's most prestigious award by the British Academy of Film and Television Arts. Connery, nominated for his portrayal of James Bond, was given the award by the original Bond, Sean Connery. The ceremony was held at the Grosvenor Hotel in London. Connery's acceptance speech was a highlight of the evening. He thanked the academy and his family. The ceremony was a celebration of the best in British film and television.

China lets dissident fly to exile in the US

By Mary Dejevsky
in Washington

THE Chinese dissident Wang Dan, a leader of the 1989 Tiananmen Square protest, arrived in the United States yesterday after being released from prison in China on medical grounds. His release, two months before President Bill Clinton visits China, was hailed by US officials as a "positive sign", but it was criticised by human rights groups as cynical ploy and a political victory for China.

In a straight replay of the release last November of China's best-known dissident, Wei Jingsheng, Mr Wang was taken from prison in Liaoning province in north-west China to Peking, then driven straight to the airport for a Northwest Airlines flight to Detroit. His release was announced by the Chinese only after the aircraft took off.

Mr Wang's mother and father were allowed to see him off. Concerned about his worsening health, they encouraged him to accept exile rather than continued captivity.

Wang Dan's release had been widely predicted in the US as a goodwill gesture in advance of the summit in Peking in June. When the news broke in China, where President Clinton was ending a four-day visit, a White House spokesman said: "This is something we have been urging them to do for quite some time, and it is a positive step."

President Clinton had faced strong domestic criticism for agreeing to go to Peking in June without apparently obtaining concessions from China on human rights. The unexpected release of Wei Jingsheng five weeks after President Jiang

Zemin's visit to Washington was seen as a welcome sign that China was sensitive to foreign criticism. But a concerted effort was made in Washington not to offend Chinese sensitivities by crowing about Mr Wei's release. It was not known how long Mr Wang would remain in Detroit. His mother, Wang Lingyun, said from Peking that his priorities were to obtain medical treatment and further his studies. She said he was coughing badly and suffered headaches.

While universally welcomed by US officials, Mr Wang's release was greeted more critically by human rights organisations which stressed that China continued to hold several thousand political prisoners and made exile a condition of freedom.

Catherine Baber, for Amnesty International in Hong Kong, said: "It's good news for Wang Dan as an individual, except that once again it's a release conditional on exile."

And on a visit to Rome, Wei Jingsheng said: "The media will probably react by saying there has been good progress as far as the human rights situation in China is concerned and I would like to insist that it's not true. The fact they freed one or two people doesn't mean they haven't been arresting many others."

Other human rights campaigners were more positive, noting that China had quietly released a number of other dissidents in the last few years who were not well-known and offered no "public relations" reward. A Washington Post dispatch from Peking yesterday described the intellectual climate there as "the most open spring since ... Tiananmen Square nine years ago".



March of time: Protesters in Hong Kong with posters of Wang Dan, a key leader of the 1989 rallies that culminated in the Tiananmen Square massacre

Photograph: Reuters

History man who became a figure of destiny

AS AN obscure history student at Peking University nine years ago, Wang Dan made far more history than he ever studied.

In the spring of 1989 he founded the Peking Autonomous Students' Federation, and so helped to launch what soon turned into a mass uprising against China's authoritarian government.

Together with a handful of fellow students, the wiry, 20-year-old young Mr Wang, with his far-from-stylish spectacles and his awkward haircut, dared to occupy Peking's Tiananmen Square and inspired million-strong marches through the streets of the city.

The protest movement started with demands for greater accountability among government officials and action to combat inflation and cor-

ruption. But the movement swelled over a six-week period, attracting workers, intellectuals and even some government officials in addition to students. It became more raucous as it grew, and spread from the capital to cities throughout China.

The challenge posed by Wang Dan and his fellow agitators was at first a mere irritation to the Communist Party leadership under Deng Xiaoping. As it continued, it became a source of humiliation to them, driving a wedge between the leaders and shattering their veneer of unity.

IN THE NEWS WANG DAN

The movement ended abruptly in the pre-dawn hours of 4 June 1989, when the People's Liberation Army stormed through the city with tanks and machine guns to retake control of Tiananmen Square for the government.

Mr Wang escaped that night, but his name and image appeared all over the nation on state-run television at the very top of the most-wanted list of counter-revolutionaries. He was

captured, tried, and sentenced to prison for subversion.

Mr Wang was released from prison in 1993, a few months before his sentence was due to end. But he vowed to continue working for democracy in China. The political climate, while considerably more relaxed than during the immediate aftermath of the 1989 episode, was still a difficult one for him in which to operate.

In March 1994 he issued an

open appeal to the government, stating that there existed much common ground between his own desire for the protection of human rights and the government's policy of maintaining stability while promoting economic growth.

The government seems to have disagreed. Mr Wang's movements were severely restricted by China's hyper-sensitive secret police.

He found himself complaining in June 1994 about constant police harassment and surveillance. Declaring himself "fed up" with it all, he launched

a two-day hunger strike to protest.

In May 1995, he issued another appeal to the authorities, calling for the release of other prisoners still jailed for their political activities.

Far from heeding his call, the authorities this time took Mr Wang himself back into custody, waiting for nearly a year and a half before formally charging him. He was sentenced in October 1996 to 11 years in prison. It was that sentence which was cut short with yesterday's sudden release into exile.

Mr Wang has said many times that he hoped to resume his studies after they were so dramatically interrupted nine years ago. After earning his place in history, he may now finally get the chance to complete his degree.

— Ted Pfaffner, Peking

WANG DAN ON HIS GOALS

"The democracy movement is not an anti-government movement."

"To protect human rights is not to overthrow the government."

"My ultimate goal is to promote the stability of society as well as democratic development..."

"I hope my goodwill will be understood by all of you and the government."

"What I do is for justice. It is consistent with the three principles I committed myself to ... not letting down the people, history, and my own conscience."

BBC defends £10,000 payment to OJ Simpson, but pulls interview after protests

By Paul McCann
Media Editor

THE BBC yesterday defended its payment of a £10,000 fee to OJ Simpson for appearing on Ruby Wax's interview show by claiming "the money did not touch OJ's hands".

Yet the corporation pulled the episode off the air last night after a

week of negative publicity, claiming scheduling difficulties. The OJ programme will now be shown on 29 April.

Simpson was acquitted two years ago of stabbing to death his ex-wife Nicole Simpson and her friend Ron Goldman, but last year a US civil court decided he was responsible for the deaths and ordered he pay

£21.5m to the victims' families.

Had Simpson been convicted of a criminal offence rather than under a civil suit, BBC rules would have stopped the broadcaster paying any money to the former American football star.

The BBC said in a statement yesterday that it was the victims' families who would benefit from

Simpson's appearance fee on the Ruby Wax show. "OJ Simpson was paid a fee within our producers' guidelines, as anyone would be on a whole programme interview. We do not discuss fees, but in this case OJ Simpson's fee, paid directly to his agent, will go into the fund that is paying legal damages awarded to the Goldman family following the

civil suit against OJ Simpson."

Despite this, the chairman of the main BBC viewers' group questioned the corporation's judgment. The Rev Graham Stevens, of the National Viewers' and Listeners' Association, described the payment as "tasteful" and questioned the use of a comedian to interview Simpson: "If they are going to make fun of

these deaths, that's rather sad. It really shouldn't be conducted by the BBC."

The show's tastefulness was questioned last week when stills from the programme were leaked to the press which showed Simpson pretending to stab Wax with a banana.

In the programme, Simpson gives the American comic a tour of Los

Angeles which includes driving past the house where Nicole Simpson and Ron Goldman were murdered. He also uses the programme to repeat his claims of innocence.

The BBC maintained yesterday that the programme was being moved because a new drama serial would have pushed it on to too late a start time.

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Move over Oasis, Britons value health and history

By Steve Boggan

LABOUR could face a backlash from voters if it persists in projecting "Cool Britannia" ahead of the more traditional Great Britain.

Conservatives and Liberal Democrats who switched to Labour at the general election are concerned that the image of Britain is being represented more by the bad behaviour of Gaffa and Oasis rather than the scientific and manufacturing excellence of the past.

They are the conclusions of a report by the market research group Opinion Leader Research, who questioned focus groups in London, Birmingham and Edinburgh to find out how switching voters felt about Labour's first year in power.

"While 'Cool Britannia' has caught the imagination of some, people are keen that the emphasis is less on pop stars and more on fields such as science, broadcasting and the performing arts," says the report. *New Great Britain - Re-inventing our Traditional Strengths*.

"The change that people voted for in 1997 was not about moving to

new territory but developing core British strengths for the future."

Voters described the "British strengths" that should be bolstered as: health and education services; quality manufacturing, computing, financial and retail sectors; creativity in music, fashion, film, design, broadcasting, advertising and the performing arts; history and tradition.

"People are keen to feel proud to be British," the report says. "They talk of a desire to return to the days when there was much greater national pride and of putting the 'Great' back into 'Great Britain'."

"Inviting pop stars and film stars to parties at Downing Street is appreciated by some in that it stresses the difference between the new government and the Conservatives. They are keen, however, that more emphasis should be put on fields with more lasting inventiveness and excellence, such as science, medicine, industrial design, broadcasting and the performing arts."

"It is felt that Britain's scientists and doctors are taken for granted and that it is this sort of excellence that should be celebrated."



In step: While many appreciate parties for stars at Downing Street, voters also want to see more emphasis on tradition and a return to the days when there was greater national pride. Photograph: Geraint Lewis

Blair vents his anger on snobs and critics

By Anthony Bevis
in Amman

TONY BLAIR yesterday let loose his feelings of frustration against critics who he dismissed as stiff-upper-lip snobs and trendy knockers.

The Prime Minister's anger had been provoked by people who deplored the atmosphere of sentimentality surrounding Diana, Princess of Wales and the growing group of trend-setters who have been sniping at the concept of Cool Britannia.

In an interview with the Sky News programme *Boulton On Sunday*, recorded in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, Mr Blair said about the Diana critics: "My view is that a lot of these people are perfectly entitled to their view, but I think there's an element of snobbery about it, actually."

"When they go on about fake sentimentality, in relation to Princess Diana, people really felt that. Why is it fake? Just because there happens to be a lot of people in the country who feel like that. I quite honestly don't understand the reason for insulting people's feelings in this respect."

When it was suggested to Mr Blair that such a reaction was "un-British" he protested: "I am British right down to my toenails. I am a believer in Britain. I am a great British patriot and I am a believer in British history. When my father tells me about the Second World War and what Britain did there, I feel an immense sense of pride - so I don't need any lectures from anybody about pride in British history and British tradition."

"But it is important for a country like Britain... that it is proud of its history but it doesn't live in its history."

Mr Blair had a similar frustration to vent on those who

have been sniping at the concept of Cool Britannia - the selling of Britain's image abroad.

He said he had never used the phrase "Cool Britannia", but the message behind it summed up the importance of a £50bn-a-year creative and intellectual industry. Design industries alone were worth more than £12bn a year and the fact was that Britain presented a very dynamic image.

"People can knock it as much as they like," he said. "But the idea of Britain being successful, outward looking, considered dynamic, the eyes of the world upon us - this is good, not bad."

He said the idea that the Government was saying British tradition did not matter was absurd. Nor had he ever said that Britain should be "re-branded". "But it is important for people in the outside world and, in a sense, for Britain, to realise that yes, we've got a great history." But he added: "We've also got a great future."

For good measure, Mr Blair went for the jugular of trendy critics such as the comedian Ben Elton, saying: "People say, 'well, this is all trendy, it's all about style'. Rubbish. It's actually about real jobs, real investment, real industry."

He said that whatever he did, there would be critics. "The thing I thought most amusing was some of the rock musicians who had been having a go at Margaret Thatcher during the Eighties for denying people jobs - remember the people's march for jobs... Now, they say when a Labour government introduces a programme, that gives all young people a guaranteed chance of high quality training or a job, with proper pay, we are attacked because actually it destroys their creative juices to be off the dole and into work."

Murdoch hires Labour adviser

By Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

LABOUR'S links with Rupert Murdoch tightened last night as a key adviser to the Prime Minister was recruited to work for the media tycoon's BSkyB broadcasting company.

Tim Allan, who has worked for Tony Blair since 1992 and who became a special adviser after last year's election, is to become Director of Corporate Communications at the station.

Last night, Conservatives claimed the move revealed a "revolving door" between No 10 and Mr Murdoch's companies. They questioned whether the appointment should be checked by a special committee under rules set up after the Nolan report on standards in public life.

Government sources said Mr Allan, who is 28, was not senior enough a figure to be covered by the rules, though. Senior civil servants and special advisers must wait three months before taking up a post in the private sector, and applications for any job within two years of leaving government must be agreed by a Whitehall scrutiny committee.

Mr Allan had denied the job was finalised after it appeared in Sunday newspapers, but last night the appointment was confirmed by the Chief Executive of British Sky Broadcasting, Mark Booth. Mr Booth will be



Tim Allan: Controversial career move

Mr Allan's immediate boss. "Tim is very bright with an exceptional background. It has been no secret that he wished to move on and we are delighted that he has decided to join us," he said.

Tim Collins, Tory MP for Westmorland and Lonsdale, said the announcement raised questions about Labour's relationship with Mr Murdoch.

"To many it will look like a revolving door relationship is emerging between Number 10 Downing Street and Rupert Murdoch's companies. Mr Blair has refused to answer questions about his lobbying on behalf of Mr Murdoch," he said.

Mr Allan confirmed that he would be leaving Downing Street, but would not comment on the appointment.

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الحسين من الاحمد



Rupert's rich brand of humour

RUPERT MURDOCH'S *Sunday Times* published its hilarious annual "Rich List" yesterday. Pandora always enjoys this supposedly "definitive" list of the UK's wealthiest 1,000 individuals - in the same spirit that Pandora loves French farces or candid photographs of former *ST* editor Andrew Neil. A running joke back again in this year's list is the "fact" that the Queen seems to have lost £4,800m and fallen from second wealthiest to 94th since 1994. The "explanation" is that she is no longer credited with ownership of her artworks. But if she doesn't own them, does she actually own any of her other assets? Why was she ever credited with owning the art in the first place? Pandora would suggest that an accounting error of £4,800m does not exactly inspire confidence in the methodology behind the *Sunday Times*'s merry list.

Yanks a million

EQUALLY laughable is the "logic" governing who does and does not qualify as one of "the richest people in Britain" according to the *ST*. Murdoch (pictured) is not included, writes the list's compiler, Philip Beresford, because he is an American citizen, "based in America."



If he were included, he would rank third in the UK. "Similarly", Beresford continues, "we take out Conrad Black, the Canadian chairman of the Telegraph group". (Pandora wonders if Black might be excluded because of enmity between him and Murdoch. No, impossible.) If Black is excluded because he's Canadian and Murdoch is now American, why then is Irishman Tony O'Reilly, proprietor of this newspaper, included? Because, explain the *ST* "rules", O'Reilly has "extensive business interests" here. Apparently this same criteria doesn't apply to interests like Murdoch's News International papers, BSkyB or Black's Telegraph group. And if Black is excluded, why is Mohamed Al Fayed, ranked 11th, included? The Egyptian owner of Harrods lacks a British passport, just like the Canadian.

Wealthy Bahamas sojourn

MURDOCH spends considerable time in Britain - far more than, say, the little-known Joseph Lewis, the British financier whom the *ST* includes and ranks 4th. He is a full-time Bahamas resident who hasn't been publicly sighted here for years. (Incidentally, who is this mysterious Dominic Prince, whom Beresford lists as "our expert on Joseph Lewis"?)

Pandora

By Michael McCarthy
Environment Correspondent

Exclusive

A LONG campaign to make the South Downs Britain's next national park has failed. It will be announced this week.

The much-loved 50-mile range of chalk hills that run from Eastbourne in Sussex to Winchester in Hampshire should not be given the most powerful landscape protection, the Countryside Commission, the Government's landscape advisory body, has decided.

Commission officials feel that the Downs, with their sweeping vistas, rare wildlife and vibrant literary associations - they inspired Hilaire Belloc, WH Hudson, Virginia Woolf and above all the poet Edward Thomas - can be protected from the increasing threats of development and mass tourism they face by a much weaker designation in terms of development control. Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

The decision was greeted last night by a chorus of protest from a powerful coalition of green groups which feel that the creation of a new national park is the only way to safeguard the Downs for the future.

"We're extremely unhappy and we're certainly not going to let it rest," said Robin Crane, chairman of the South Downs Campaign Group, which takes in 15 national and local environmental bodies, from the Council for the Protection of Rural England and the Council for National Parks to the Ramblers' Association.

"There are enormous threats to the Downs. We have presented an overwhelming case for national park status and nobody has yet answered it."

"We have an awful lot of information showing there is an overwhelming public feeling in the south-east for national park status," said Chris Todd of



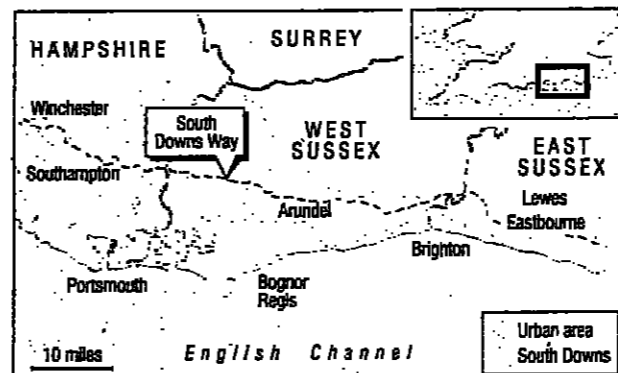
Under pressure: Without national park status, development and tourism will continue to threaten the South Downs

Photograph: Robert Harding

Friends of the Earth. "The Countryside Commission, which is an unelected and unaccountable quango, is simply ignoring it, even though it was recently asked to carry out a public consultation exercise on the Downs' future."

Michael Meacher, the environment minister, asked the commission how the Downs might best be managed after he took office last year, giving hope to the burgeoning national park campaign.

The Downs were among the 12 areas initially recommended as national parks by the Hobhouse report in 1947 but escaped designation largely because they did not fit the "model" of the time, which was based on upland landscape.



The campaigners now feel the lowland chalk hills are too beautiful and too important to be left out.

The point was made by the naturalist-writer WH Hudson, who wrote: "During the whole fifty-three mile length from

Beachy Head to Harting the ground never rises above a height of 850 feet, but we feel on top of the world."

The Downs are vulnerable because of their closeness to large population centres: London is only 45 miles to the north

and a series of large coastal towns is strung along their southern edge, from Southampton and Portsmouth to Brighton and Eastbourne. Every year they receive 30 million visitors, more than any of the 10 national parks, and housing, roads and industrial development are nibbling steadily into their edges.

Their chalk grassland with its rare plants, insects and butterflies has also come under sustained assault from intensive farming. But although the Downs form a landscape and ecological unity, there is no powerful overall planning body to look after them as a whole - which is what a national park would do.

The recommendation that

the Downs be given only AONB status will be put to the nine Countryside Commissioners at a meeting in Leeds on Thursday by the commission's officials, led by the chief executive Richard Wakeford.

Their report says: "Officers advise that designation as a national park would not be right under current law and policy, and full National Park Authority powers are not necessary to meet the management needs identified through the consultation." In the normal course of events the commissioners would rubber-stamp the recommendation and the Government would accept the advice.

Leading article, page 14

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Lesbians battle for the right to marry

By Andrew Buncombe

A LESBIAN couple, one of whom was born a man but lives as a woman, are taking legal action after they were refused permission to marry.

In an action that could have wide-reaching effects, Tracie O'Keefe and Katrina Fox will try to force Westminster Register office to overturn a decision not to let them marry as man and wife. The birth certificate of Ms O'Keefe, a transsexual woman who was born with a male physiognomy, records her as a male.

While the law does not permit two women to marry, the couple decided to take advantage of another law that does not allow the gender on a birth certificate to be altered.

"We thought surely the law cannot have it all ways," said Ms O'Keefe.

"If they will not allow me to change my birth certificate then legally they must consider me a man. If that is the case they should not be able to stop us marrying as man and wife."

Ms O'Keefe, 42, a psychotherapist and clinical hypnotherapist, said they had served notice of their intention to marry at Westminster Register Office in London.

But when she went to see the Superintendent Registrar the day before their planned wedding, she was informed they would not be able to go ahead.

"I supposed I was puzzled more than anything else. I showed him my birth certificate, which showed I was a man but he did not seem to believe me," said Ms O'Keefe, who has lived as a woman since she was 15 and underwent surgery at the

age of 21. She said the couple had decided to try to get married to afford them the same legal rights in regard to inheritance and pensions as heterosexual couples.

"The situation is insane. I want the same rights as a straight person," said Ms O'Keefe, a bisexual, who has twice been married - albeit illegally - to men.

"Because I cannot, we decided we would try and do it this way. It is ridiculous that I should find myself having to discuss my entire history with a man at the register office."

"If this was Holland there would be no problem but the English are so hung-up about sex."

The couple have contacted a solicitor, David Burgess, who is now preparing to take legal action to try and force the register office to change its decision.

Legal action should not be necessary. A spokeswoman for the Office for National Statistics, which oversees register offices, said they were aware of the case.



Holy deadlock: Tracie O'Keefe (left), who was born a man, and who is being denied permission to marry Katrina Fox (right) Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

"The Superintendent Registrar contacted the General Registrar's Office, because he was concerned there might be a breach of the marriage law," she said.

She said there should be no problem for the couple to get

married as long as Ms O'Keefe could prove she is the person named on her birth certificate. "There have been a number of marriages in situations like this."

Ms O'Keefe, author of *Trans-X-All*, is unimpressed.

She said: "How am I supposed to do that. We have a situation where I am suffering prejudice because of the way I look."

Ms Fox, 31, said: "It is very difficult. When Tracie came back from the register office she was very upset. She has had to

fight prejudice all her life."

Alex Whinnom, a spokesman for Press For Change - a group campaigning on behalf of transsexual men and women - said: "I think this case highlights the extraordinary paradox that many people

like Tracie are in. "I think it shows the need for a lot more education."

"The fact that the establishment can discriminate against transsexual people means that people who have prejudices are given free rein."

French mayors explode over 'poisonous' plan for gay weddings

By Marcus Tanner

THOUSANDS of French mayors have signed a petition calling on the government to drop its project to legalise a form of gay marriage. The petition is in response to the plan of Lionel Jospin's Socialist administration to allow gays and lesbians to enter into a "contract of social union".

Though not quite a mar-

riage in the full ceremonial sense, these contracts would allow gays to enjoy the same fiscal and social benefits as heterosexual couples. The law is expected to be introduced before the end of the year.

But that was before one right-wing mayor, Michel Pinton, decided to send out letters to his 36,000 colleagues all over France urging them to register their opposition. Mayors

in France preside over civil marriages. By the end of last week, the Pinton team claimed they had received 12,000 replies, with new messages pouring in every day.

Mr Pinton, a former secretary general of the right-of-centre UDF party and now mayor of the village of Pétion in central France, told his colleagues in a letter that the nation's town halls, faced a

"poisonous menace" as a result of the plan.

"In our sick French society, the two things that are still healthy, the family and the town council, are now being threatened by a catastrophic weakness," he wrote.

"It may be that this new form of marriage, which would have to officiate at, clashes with our constitution. It is a hinting that the worst was

yet to come, he went on: "Behind these homosexual 'families', a sad parody of a true family, other liaisons will rush in, beginning with polygamous marriages."

The plan's supporters point out that the new law will not enable gays and lesbians to have a civil ceremony in the town hall but will simply be signed in front of any town-hall

official, Jean-Paul Pontigues, of the Campaign for the Social Contract, said he also doubted one third of France's 36,000 mayors had replied to the petition, as Mr Pinton has not released any names.

"Maybe some mayors from small villages have signed up, but not 12,000," he said. "We are not sure if there has been any real opposition. It is all false information."

Recruitment crisis warning by RCN chief

By Jeremy Laurence
Health Editor

YOUNG people are turning their backs on nursing as a career and threatening the future of the NHS, nurses' leaders warned yesterday.

Hospitals are in danger of becoming nurse-free zones, with up to one in four posts in some wards no vacant.

Christine Hancock, general secretary of the Royal College of Nursing, said the health service was facing a recruitment crisis. "If we can't keep our nurses and attract new people to the profession there won't even be an NHS in ten years' time."

"There is real frustration. Nurses know how to provide the best quality patient care but they often don't have the opportunity or support to put it into practice."

Speaking on the eve of the RCN's annual congress in Bournemouth, Ms Hancock cited the case of a cancer patient who had been shunted among five different hospital wards. "You can't get nursed properly in that situation."

"The patient had had a kidney removed and he was very warm" about the struggle the nurses had to look after him. But he also knew he should have had better care," Ms Hancock said the crisis was the result of growing pressures on NHS staff which were forcing nurses to leave. Over the past decade hospitals were treating 23 per cent more patients but the number of registered nurses had gone up six per cent. Problems with nurse recruitment tend to follow the economic cycle.

In times of boom, as now, when job opportunities are plentiful and pay rates high, young people tend to desert nursing for other jobs. In times of recession, the NHS benefits

as staff turnover falls and recruitment rises. The recruitment crisis and nurses' anger over the staging of their pay award is expected to guarantee a frosty reception for Frank Dobson, the Secretary of State for Health, when he addresses the congress, attended by 2,000 nurses, today.

Nurses were awarded a 3.8 per cent pay rise this year but the Government is to pay it in two stages, with two per cent this month and a further 1.8 per cent next December, reducing its



Hancock's dire warning of 'nurse-free' zones

overall value to 2.7 per cent. Ms Hancock said pay was a critical factor for over 90 per cent of nurses in determining when they stayed with the NHS. There are 8,000 posts vacant and one in three students is dropping out of nursing courses. Of those who do qualify, fewer are staying on.

Nurses still working for the NHS two years after qualification dropped from 96 per cent in 1990 to 86 per cent in 1995. A survey by the Health Department showed more than eight out of ten hospitals in England reported difficulty in recruiting nurses. Ms Hancock urged nurses to speak out when standards fell to unacceptable levels.

Jack Straw urges World Cup fans to resist temptation

Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, yesterday sought to drive home the message that English and Scottish fans without tickets should resist the temptation to travel to France this summer for the World Cup.

Mr Straw reiterated the Government's "stay at home" message following the controversy over French tourism minister Michelle Demessine's apparent suggestion that ticketless supporters would be welcome in France to savour the atmosphere of the tournament. This week in London, Ms Demessine called on British supporters to "join the party".

But Mr Straw said: "... she later clarified what she said to make it clear she was saying that tourists generally would continue to be welcome in France ... Everybody has an interest in ensuring that the World Cup games go off without incident and without shame being brought to Britain," he told *The World This Weekend* on BBC Radio 4. Mr Straw insisted the British Government's approach was only common sense.

Appeal to abuse victims

A Roman Catholic teaching order which has publicly apologised to victims of cruelty and sex abuse at its school in Ireland yesterday appealed to any victims from its English schools to come forward.

The Christian Brothers said it was investigating several cases in England. Brother Francis Hall, deputy provincial leader for England, yesterday encouraged victims to contact him. "I'm sure it [the abuse] has happened over the years here in England ... We would welcome now anyone to contact us on 0161 904 0786," he told the *Sunday* programme on Radio 4. He added later: "One or two cases have come to light in England in the last few years. They are being investigated." Any allegations would be referred to the appropriate authorities if that is what the person wanted, he said. More than a thousand calls have been made to an Irish helpline since the Christian Brothers in Ireland made their public apology at the end of March.

The order was founded in 1820 to educate poor Catholics and has schools in 26 countries.

Keeping an eye on sugar

Too much sugar in the blood can lead to blindness, researchers investigating the effects of ageing have found.

As people age there is a strong possibility they will experience an intolerance to glucose, the natural sugar used by the body. Scientists at the Open University Research Centre in Oxford have found that collagen, a major structural body protein, is susceptible to sugar attack, and this can damage the eye. The human cornea and sclera - the "white" of the eye - are both rich in collagen.

Dr Malik and colleague Dr Keith Meek used intense X-rays to examine eye tissue. Dr Malik said: "We demonstrated that central lens tissue is significantly altered by glucose and [the natural fruit sugar] fructose." Such age-related damage resulted in the development of cataracts, and similar damage to optic nerve tissue may also be implicated in glaucoma.

The study is one of five projects being funded by the charity Research into Ageing.

Winning lottery numbers

Four National Lottery ticketholders will share the £8.2m jackpot from Saturday night's draw. The winning numbers are 29, 33, 42, 13, 31, 1; bonus number 9.

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British
family
seized in
Yemen

Techno-failure adds to the Base Camp Blues

I AM sure at some distant gathering of mountaineers I have heard an ironic song called "Base Camp Blues". Well I know this gloomy state for real now.

It was one of those days when you wonder whether climbing big mountains is really worth the frustrations of the long build-up; getting on each other's nerves, missing the family, the generally awful food. After all, take away the acclimatisation climbs to higher camps and our serious go for the summit will probably take up no more than seven days out of the 70 days of our Himalayan Kingdoms expedition.

I'm not after sympathy here. Mountaineers are, in Lionel Terray's classic book title "Conquistadors of the Useless". But perhaps it is this diary's duty to show that climbing Everest is not all derring-do in the Khumbu Icefall or on the Hillary Step. It is also washing your socks and underpants in a tin bowl and then watching them freeze rigid, pegged to the tent guylines.

Let's be honest, part of my frustration stems from having to do a job of work in addition to the mountaineering. While other members of the team can doze in their tents after lunch, I have to puzzle out how to get the diary back to London when the promised Base Camp electricity and communications are either problematic or non-existent. The replacement satellite telephone said to be on its way has taken on the status of a mythical being, as likely to appear coming up the track by the Khumbu Glacier as the Yeti. And the small Honda generator supposed to power up our computers, digital cameras and personal stereos, as well as light the mess tent, stubbornly refuses to run for more than a few minutes.

Others in the multi-national circus of Base Camp have similar problems. Technology



STEPHEN GOODWIN
Everest Diary
Base Camp

seems to exhibit parallel weaknesses to human beings at high altitude. It becomes brittle and likely to fail at the slightest provocation.

Our phone, according to supposition, packed up when snow was brushed from a solar panel causing a power surge. It seems odd that such a trumpeted go-anywhere piece of kit can't cope with that. So I remain dependent on the goodwill and high prices of the Everest Challenge team led by Tom Whittaker, the one-footed Anglo-American, to get any story back at all.

While my companions rested, I spent the afternoon of this Base Camp Blues day with Eric Howard, Whittaker's communications expert from Flagstaff, Arizona, trying to set up a palmtop computer for writing higher up the mountain. But so far it is unable to talk to any of the Base Camp PCs and is, therefore, no more useful than pencil and paper, and good deal heavier.

A first-hand account of Tommy Heinrich, a tough Argentinian member of the Everest Challenge team and past summiteer, wretching at Camp Two after carrying too heavy a load, was a salutary weight warning.

Perhaps it was not the best of days to call home (on the "Camp America" phone of course). Being apart from Lucia, my wife, and daughter Rosie, is the hardest part of the trip. Yes, I know a few diaries



Heading up the Western Cwm: Everest looms over the Himalayan Kingdoms team

Photograph: Stephen Goodwin, using a Fuji DS-300 digital camera

ago I called this a "dream assignment". I guess that just piles up another contradiction in the climbing game. It is absurd trying to reassure loved ones that what I'm doing "isn't dangerous" when they know Everest's history as well as I do.

"Take care," everyone says. Of course I will, but we know that care will not stop an avalanche or a serac collapse in the icefall. Each night I can

hear their roar. Late today fresh movements hit two ladders on prepared route and these will have to be re-rigged.

We are due to go that way ourselves in the morning, en route for Camp Two near the head of the Western Cwm for a few days acclimatisation at around 6,500m in the shadow of Everest's south-west face. It will take me to a personal high, though I will be unable to measure it. My altimeter

only functions up to 6,000m. For an Alps climber it was more than adequate and in my short-notice preparation for Everest it was detail that got overlooked.

I could rely on my better-equipped companions, but I expect I will know when the air starts getting thin.

On a more mundane level, I made the phone call home at

UK breakfast time. Instead of sitting hunched in a chilly tent, I could have been enjoying fresh coffee and toast in a dining room. Meals at Base Camp are a gastronomic mystery tour with a shortage of pleasant surprises. Arjun, our smiling cook, has no shortage of potentially appetising ingredients but their treatment is often a bit odd. Last night we had spaghetti and a tomatoish sauce. So far

so good. But with it went mashed potato and onion bhajis. Mindful of the need to stoke up on calories, I forced down the lot.

Returning to my tent at the end of the day, I found bird shit all over my face flannel, left to dry over the end of a tent-pole. Grandma might have said it was lucky. But at the time it seemed like just another line in those old Base Camp Blues.

Report slams murder inquiry police

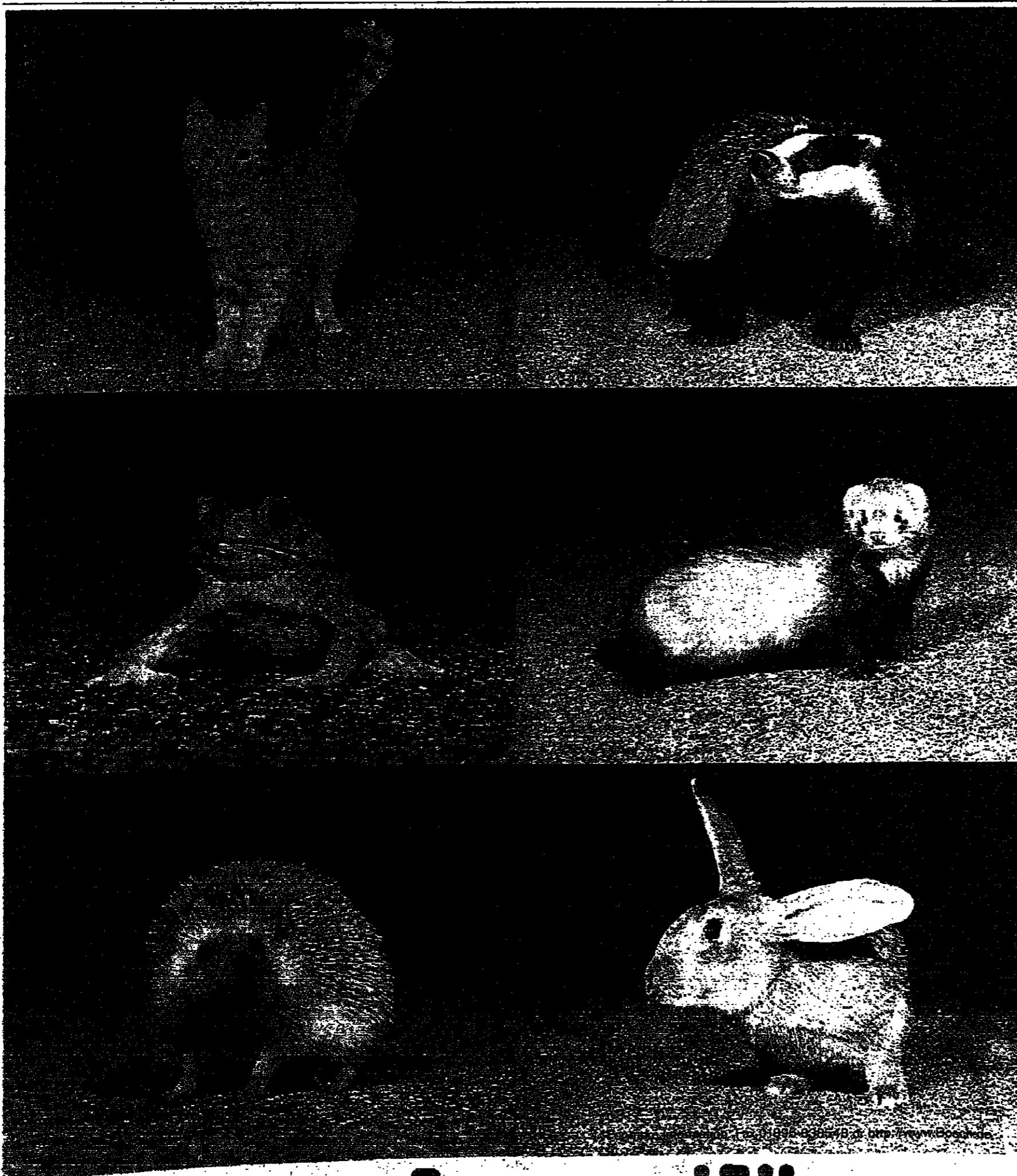
A REPORT believed to accuse a Scottish police force of incompetence and neglect over its handling of a nine-year-old boy is to be published today. The independent report into Grampian Police by an officer appointed by the Scottish Office is expected to catapult the force and its Chief Constable, Dr Ian Oliver, into more controversy.

He has already chosen to take early retirement after an unrelated controversy in February in which a newspaper published pictures of him in an apparent embrace with a young married woman. He denied impropriety but, already a controversial figure, announced he was taking early retirement and will leave the force later this year. Reports have suggested today's document will expose serious flaws in the police investigation of the Aberdeen boy Scott Simpson, murdered last July, and will place further pressure on Dr Oliver to resign.

Scotland on Sunday said the report recommends key elements of the force, in particular the CID, should undergo a radical overhaul.

And communication and links between the departments of the force should also be overhauled, says the report, by Lothian and Border's Deputy Chief Constable, Graham Power. The report focuses mainly on the day Scott went missing - Thursday, July 17, 1997 - and the following day.

Grampian Police appeared to treat it as little more than a missing-person inquiry and when his body was found five days later it was discovered in an area which had already been searched by police.



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Extra £10m for bowel cancer treatment

By Jeremy Laurance
Health Editor

THE Government is to invest an extra £10m to improve poor standards of treatment for one of the most neglected and unfashionable cancers.

Frank Dobson, the Secretary of State for Health, will announce today the extra cash for bowel cancer at a conference in London. He said it would be used to improve the quality and availability of services and to bring down waiting times.

Bowel cancer kills 19,000 people a year, second only to lung cancer and over 50 per cent more than breast cancer. Cure rates vary widely between hospitals and surgeons and lives would be saved if treatment were concentrated in the hands of the best.

Mr Dobson said: "Bowel cancer causes untold distress to patients, who are often elderly, and their families. The Government is committed to improving services for people with cancer. We are not prepared to settle for second best."

The extra £10m is the second tranche of money invested in a specific cancer by the Government since the election after last year's £10m boost for breast cancer services.

Baroness Jay, the health minister, will tell the conference, entitled "Caring for cancer", that increasing awareness is a key priority.

"In the past, bowel cancer has received far less attention than other cancers, such as breast cancer, yet some 27,000 people are diagnosed with it every year. Survival rates in this country are not as good as many other Western countries."

Campaigners for improved services include Stefanie Moore, widow of the England striker Bobby Moore, who died of the disease, and Lynne Faulds Wood, the television presenter, who has recovered after

treatment. Although the disease can strike young people, most patients are over 50. However, only a minority of those with bowel cancer get ideal treatment.

Diagnosis is frequently delayed because patients are embarrassed to consult their GP about early signs, such as blood in the faeces, and GPs are slow to refer. "Too many cases of cancer have been treated as irritable bowel syndrome for years by GPs who never had them checked out," said Cecilia Yardley, of Colon Cancer Concern. Most patients who need surgery are operated on by general surgeons who do not have the specialist skills necessary.

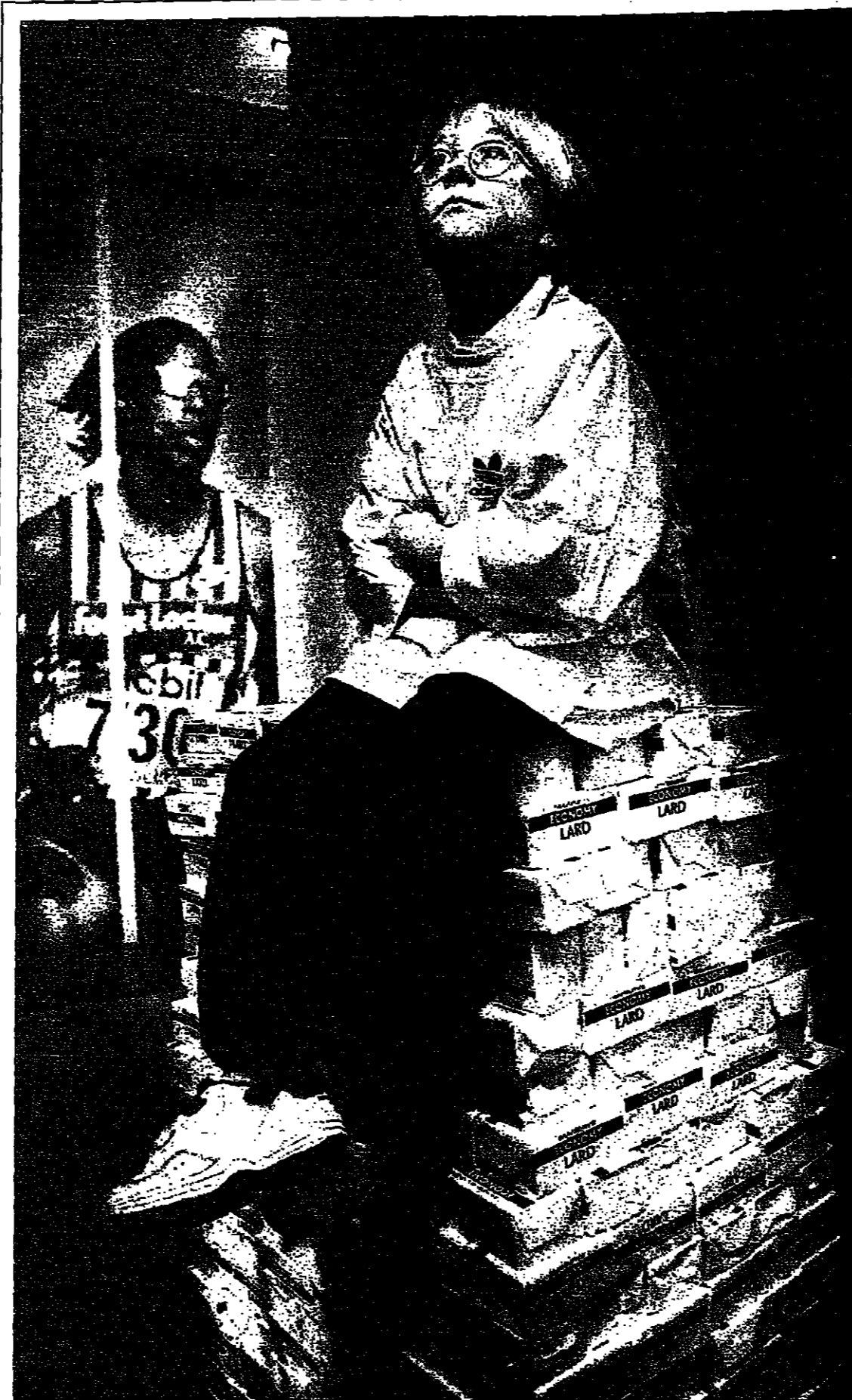
Guidance issued by the health department to all GPs, health authorities and NHS trusts last November cites Scottish studies showing that five-year survival rates vary from 20 per cent to 60 per cent, depending on the surgeon carrying out the operation. One hospital had twice the survival rate of others.

The guidance was based on a review of research by the NHS Centre for Reviews and Dissemination at York University. Arabella Melville, its author, said: "The variations in treatment are much more serious with this treatment than with others but it doesn't have a high profile and it is not something people want to know about. Thousands of lives could be saved if this guidance were followed."

Mr Dobson is also due to sign a "Concordat" committing the Government, voluntary organisations and health authorities to delivering high-quality services.

Nick Young, chief executive of Macmillan Cancer Relief, said: "The words are fine but what we need now is action."

"We still have a cancer lottery in this country. The quality of the cancer treatment and care you receive can still depend on where you live."



Fat facts: Felix Read, seven, on a lard mountain showing the amount a typical child eats between the ages of 6-16 in the Science of Sport exhibition at the Science Museum in London yesterday. Photograph: Rui Xavier

Beckett cut out of secret union talks

By Barrie Clement
Labour Editor

Exclusive

A SECRET offer has been tabled by 10 Downing Street in an attempt to reach agreement over the highly contentious issue of union power in the workplace.

The confidential initiative by the Prime Minister's Policy Unit - which in effect marginalises ministers at the Department of Trade and Industry - will form part of discussions today at a private meeting of half a dozen of the country's most senior trade unionists.

The Independent understands that officials have proposed rules to govern ballots on union recognition which are set to appear in a White Paper on "fairness at work" due for publication soon.

The seemingly inconsequential detail of the legislation could have a major impact on industrial relations in Britain, but also on the readiness of unions to continue to fund the Labour Party. The fact that proposals seem to have emerged without direct input from Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade and the minister responsible for employment rights, could provoke a serious rift in the Cabinet.

The key element of the plan, which has yet to enjoy the final imprimatur of the Prime Minister, centres on the degree of employee support required before a union wins recognition.

Tony Blair's advisers have offered unions a choice: either there should be a 60 per cent turnout in a ballot with a simple majority required for recognition to be granted, or 40 per cent of the entire workforce would need to back it. It is thought that these two options would supersede any tentative plans tabled by the DTI.

It is understood that either formulation would attract the tacit acceptance of the CBI - which is however opposed to

the law in principle. It is also believed that a "grudging acceptance" is emerging among union leaders in favour of the 60 per cent option.

Full details of the proposal are unlikely to be revealed to a special session today of the ruling general council of the TUC which will follow the meeting of the "inner circle" of senior trade unionists.

John Monks, the TUC general secretary, will attempt to allay the fears of general council members, many of whom are frustrated with what they see as the Prime Minister's prevarication. Mr Monks will be keen to defuse the row on a day when the traditionally militant Scottish TUC starts its annual conference in Perth.

Many trade unionists argue that Mr Blair seems far more concerned with placating the CBI than delivering a pledge in the Labour Party manifesto. The employers' organisation has insisted that ballots should be successful only if recognition received the endorsement of more than half the workforce, while the TUC wanted it to be a majority of those voting.

It is not clear, however, when the much-postponed White Paper will be published, and it is possible that a 6 May conference on the issue planned by the TUC may have to be cancelled. One senior union official said yesterday that discussions on the White Paper would leave a "bitter taste" whatever its contents.

Another issue exercising the minds of unions is the CBI's insistence that small firms should be exempt from the law. However, the CBI's view that the threshold should be set at 50 employees would exclude more than seven million employees, the TUC says. Union leaders would prefer a limit of perhaps 20 workers.



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April Fool no joke in plan to fill Lords from electoral roll

By Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

IT'S A funny old world, as Margaret Thatcher once said. Three weeks after *The Independent's* April Fool's spoof suggested peers would be selected by lottery in a reformed House of Lords, the idea is edging towards reality.

A paper to be published this month by the Blairite Demos think-tank says hereditary peers should be replaced by citizens' jurors picked from the electoral roll.

Based on the principles of ancient Athens, the system would allow "Peers in Parliament" or "PPs" either to sit for a four-year period or simply to see through a particular Bill.

Jurors could be picked from

each region of the country and balanced to provide equal numbers of men and women.

The report, "The Athenian Solution", was written before *The Independent's* story appeared but its introduction was rewritten to take account of it.

"It is said that there are three stages in the life of every important idea. First it is ignored. Next it is ridiculed. Then it becomes accepted wisdom," it says.

The report goes on: "A good supply of April Fool headlines lies in store. 'Government to give Scots their own Parliament might be one'."

The idea, it seems, is not a new one.

Tony Wright, now MP for Great Yarmouth, once floated it in a letter to the *Guardian* newspaper. Geoff Mulgan, di-

rector of Demos, has also raised it. And the paper's authors, Anthony Barnett and Peter Carty, both developed it independently before working on it together.

Even Lord Cranborne, the Tory leader in the Lords, once suggested in defence of hereditary peers that they could be compared to the legislators of ancient Athens, where a jury selected at random from free male citizens used to rule.

"We would have to see whether it could work. You could have the equivalent of a

citizens' jury in the committees while leaving the present Lords," he said.

The paper says an elected second chamber would create "a destructive alternative" to the House of Commons. "We already have enough nationally elected politicians," it says.

Both political appointees and cross-benchers could continue to be appointed, as they are at present, and could sit alongside the jurors.

All the evidence suggests the citizens' peers will be up to the job, the paper argues.

"Some will say daft things and some will be ridiculous. But on the whole politicians and journalists, the two main groups that presently hold the government to account, contain more than the average share of such failings," it says.

One black, 40 Asians in Britain's richest 500

By Kim Sengupta

THERE is just one black person in the ranks of Britain's 500 wealthiest people. But even that is seen as an encouraging sign of economic empowerment. In the previous 10 years of the list, compiled by the *Sunday Times*, there had been none at all.

Carl Cushnie, the son of a Jamaican engineer, dropped out of university to start an entrepreneurial career and stands 312th in the list with an estimated fortune of £71m. Last year he was 564th.

It had taken 48-year-old Mr Cushnie five years to join the 500 Club since he started his investment business, the Versailles Group, borrowing £1.6m in an audacious move just as the recession was going to bite.

Apart from him, there is just one other black person among the wealthiest 1,000, the heavyweight boxing champion Lennox Lewis at 799th place. In contrast, there are 40 Asians in the top 500 alone, with a 21-



One in 500: Carl Cushnie

year-old, Reubin Singh, just outside at 508th having amassed £45m.

However, Mr Cushnie's success is regarded as significant because it has been achieved in the world of business. It has been far more common for British black people to have made their money through sport and entertainment. In the past, the boxer Frank Bruno, and singers Shirley Bassey and Sade have been top among wealthy black people.

Mr Cushnie was born in Jamaica and moved to Britain with his family when he was 13. After A-levels at Willesden grammar school in north-west London, he went on to study mathematics at London University. But he dropped out after a year and soon set up his own computer company.

It was then that he spotted a gap in the market for financing small and medium-sized companies. He borrowed funds from a Scandinavian bank and set up Versailles. Since then it has achieved a turnover of more than £100m, and employs around 40 staff.

When Versailles was at its embryonic stage, Mr Cushnie often put in working days of 16 hours. Now it tends to be more leisureed 10-hour days, but he still takes no more than three weeks' holiday a year.

Married with four children, Mr Cushnie eschews the millionaire lifestyle and prefers the simpler pleasures of walking, cycling, squash and a drink at the

local pub. He is reluctant to dwell on either his wealth or his colour, and said in a recent interview: "I have a sense of pride in what I have accomplished. The fact that I am black may be important to some people, but what is important to me is what I do and how I live my life."

"I have gone to the City, made my presentations and nobody has ever said 'Carl, we will lend this money to you because you are black'. Or 'Carl, we won't lend this money to you because you are black'. It [his colour] is not something I carry around with me."



هكمان الاصل



Baby talk: Tony Blair with a family at Baqa'a, the biggest Palestinian refugee camp in Jordan. Photograph: Ali Jareki/Reuters

Blair pleads for peace at Holocaust shrine

By Anthony Bevins
in Jerusalem

TONY BLAIR last night made an emotion-packed appeal to the people and leaders of Israel to go for the heights of peace.

Following a visit to the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial, Mr Blair wrote a full page in the Book of Remembrance, setting down the depth of his private, emotional feelings.

His tribute to the Jewish people, then and now, concluded: "We will never forget, or if we do, we will repeat the mistakes and tragedies of history." Then, in an emotional speech - which was heard on the radio by Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister - Mr Blair said he had first visited the memorial with his wife, Cherie, four years ago and they had never forgotten it. The Prime Minister added: "Having realised the depths of evil which humanity can sink, now let us hope in the future we can show the heights to which humanity can rise."

Against a background of diplomatic reports of an improved "atmosphere" in which the peace process could once more be shoved back on to the road, Mr Blair went into his first talks with Mr Netanyahu.

Today he meets the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, in Gaza, but last night Mr Netanyahu said: "It is essential that Israel achieve a peace which leaves it with secure and defensible boundaries. That is quintessential."

And, against the background of a Northern Ireland deal which is regarded as "a good omen" in the words of King Hussein of Jordan earlier in the

day, Mr Netanyahu said he believed Mr Blair could "inspire us to bolster and accelerate our efforts in our peace negotiations here".

Replying directly to the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr Blair said the lesson of Northern Ireland was that peace was not a zero-sum game. "The one side doesn't have to win; the other side loses."

"If we can establish a settlement, both sides win. Both sides get both the peace again and the prosperity and indeed the security that they need."

He said the other lesson from Ulster was that "where there are obstacles, they should be overcome; where there are differences they shall always be surmounted."

And referring back to his Yad Vashem visit, Mr Blair boldly told the Israeli people

and leaders: "The best way that we can pay tribute to the suffering and the pain and the agony and the anguish that is marked by that memorial is for all of us to do all we can to advance the cause of justice and of peace and democracy in the world."

During his visit to Yad Vashem, Mr Blair rekindled the eternal flame in front of a crypt containing the ashes of some of the six million victims of the Nazis.

A pervasive message from all the countries Mr Blair has visited so far is that if peace is not moved forward, prospects for peace in the Middle East could fade. In Amman yesterday King Hussein said he believed the situation could be saved. The alternative was that "we will be plunged into a very dark and very dangerous period".

Visit exposes British failure on refugees

By Anthony Bevins

BRITAIN'S poor record of support for Palestinian refugees was exposed during Tony Blair's tour of the Middle East yesterday, when he paid a flying visit to the biggest refugee camp in Jordan.

While the Prime Minister was buried in a walkabout scrum of excited children, a spokesman for the United Nations Relief (UNRRA) and Works Agency told *The Independent* the British had a below-par record as a donor.

When *The Independent* put that point to Mr Blair later at a press conference with King Hussein of Jordan, he indicated there could be more money in the pipeline.

Mr Blair told *The Independent*: "The British contribution is something for the Department for International Development. We are actually in the process of considering it, and certainly as I saw myself on the visit this morning, there is a tremendous need there, so we shall see what we can do."

During his visit to the camp, Mr Blair's first port of call was a bakery, built courtesy of a £15,000 donation from Britain. Later, Mr Blair visited a hospital, built courtesy of the Canadian government, and doctors there told *The Independent* that there were no surgical facilities in any of the Palestinian camps in Jordan.

The hospital at Camp Baqa'a treats 120,000 patients a year between six doctors. The doctors treat 100 patients a day each, allowing only three minutes per patient. The doctors said the budget for medical treatment worked out at £4 per person per year.

UNRRA runs all the camps, hospitals, schools and social services, and runs a deficit of \$70m (£42m) a year. Britain's contribution to UNRRA - which deals only with Palestinian refugees - is currently running below its official UN assessment level.

After yesterday's visit, it is now clearly the Prime Minister's job when he gets back to Britain on Tuesday to get an increase.

Jerusalem mayor boycotts reception

TONY BLAIR'S Israeli and Palestinian hosts are eager to put behind them the ill will provoked by the visit last month of the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook. But old sores do not heal so quickly in this cantankerous corner of the world, writes Eric Silver in Jerusalem.

The right-wing Likud mayor of Jerusalem, Ehud Olmert, last night boycotted a state dinner given for the Prime Minister and his wife, Cherie, by the Israeli Prime

Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, in protest at the British leader's refusal to call on him. Mr Olmert said he was "astounded" by this breach of protocol, which both his predecessors, Baroness Thatcher and John Major, had honoured.

An Israeli foreign ministry official said such calls were "a custom, but not an obligation". Mr Blair had been asked to visit the mayor, but his aides replied that he never called on foreign mayors.

Jailed nurses' plight put to Saudi king

HOPES OF an early release for British nurses Deborah Farry and Lucille McLauchlan, jailed in Saudi Arabia following the murder of their Australian colleague, Yvonne Gilford, were raised by Tony Blair yesterday when he revealed that a plea for clemency was urgently being considered by King Fahd, writes Anthony Bevins.

Following a meeting on Saturday night with Crown Prince Abdullah, heir to the Saudi throne, the Prime Minister's spokesman was being tight-lipped about developments.

However, in an interview with *Boulton on Sunday*, for Sky News, the Prime Minister deliberately used the word "urgent" when talking of consideration being given by the King to the case.

Mr Blair said: "It's not difficult in any sense, whilst paying complete respect to the victim of the crime, to raise the

case of these two people. I think people will expect the government to do that."

"What the Crown Prince indicated to me was that the families themselves had petitioned the King here for mercy, and they said that they would give that very serious consideration."

But he added: "I believe that they will give it very serious consideration and I don't think it is prudent for me to say more at this stage." He said it was best not to speculate about the timing of any release.

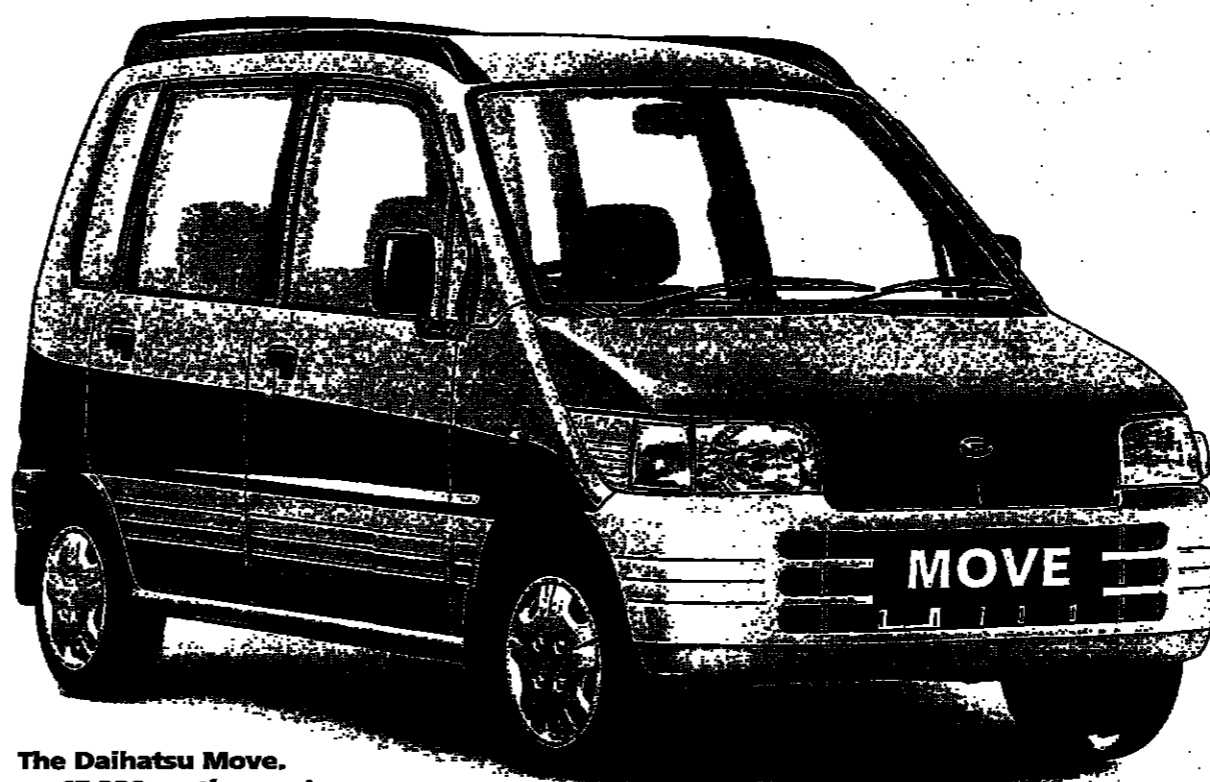
Later, following talks with King Hussein of Jordan in Amman, before flying to Israel, the Prime Minister was again asked about the fate of the nurses.

Again, he initially said that the petition would be seriously considered - and then injected the word "urgent" into his reply.

Ms Farry and Ms McLauchlan have been in jail for 17 months.

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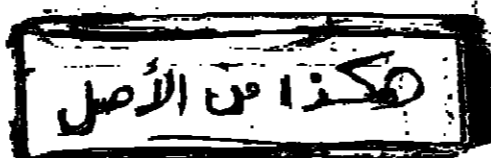
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Art lovers rush to save remains of Velazquez

By Elizabeth Nash
in Madrid

HERITAGE authorities in Madrid are rushing to exhumate the bones of the artist Diego de Velazquez, 338 years after his death, after discovering that the city hall plans to widen a roundabout over what is thought to be his grave.

The heritage authority apparently only learned of the plans from the newspapers.

This is not the first example of the casual approach of Madrid's municipal authorities to the artistic patrimony lying beneath its feet. Two years ago a furious row erupted when the remains of a nearby former royal palace where Velazquez worked, whose chapel was depicted in one of his best-known paintings, *Las Filanderas*, were bulldozed to make way for an



Unquiet graves: Velazquez, in a self-portrait of 1643

car park. The conservative mayor, Jose Maria Alvarez de Manzana, defended the destruction, saying: "Madrid is full of such historical remains."

The body of Spain's most illustrious master was supposedly deposited in 1660 in the crypt of a church that used to occu-

py the site of the Plaza Ramblas in the old heart of the capital. This is a small grassy oasis at the meeting point of a number of handsome early 19th-century mansions. It is shielded from the circulating traffic by low iron railings of the sort that might protect a Surrey bowling green.

The only clue that this is the resting place of the artist, responsible for *Las Meninas* and other masterworks of Spain's Golden Age is a pretty plinth bearing the inscription: "In this place was situated the parish church of San Juan, where the Court painter Silva y Velazquez was buried."

In 1809 Spain's occupying French ruler Joseph Bonaparte, Napoleon's brother, ordered the church to be swept away to create an square. But it is assumed that the buried bones remain intact. "Only the walls

were pulled down," a heritage spokesman said. "It's a unique opportunity for us," he added. "According to our records, there has never been an attempt to recover the artist's remains. If we don't, the roadworks will probably ruin them."

The heritage body, Patrimonio, says that if human remains are found, the best forensic experts will be called upon to confirm whether or not the artist's bones are among them.

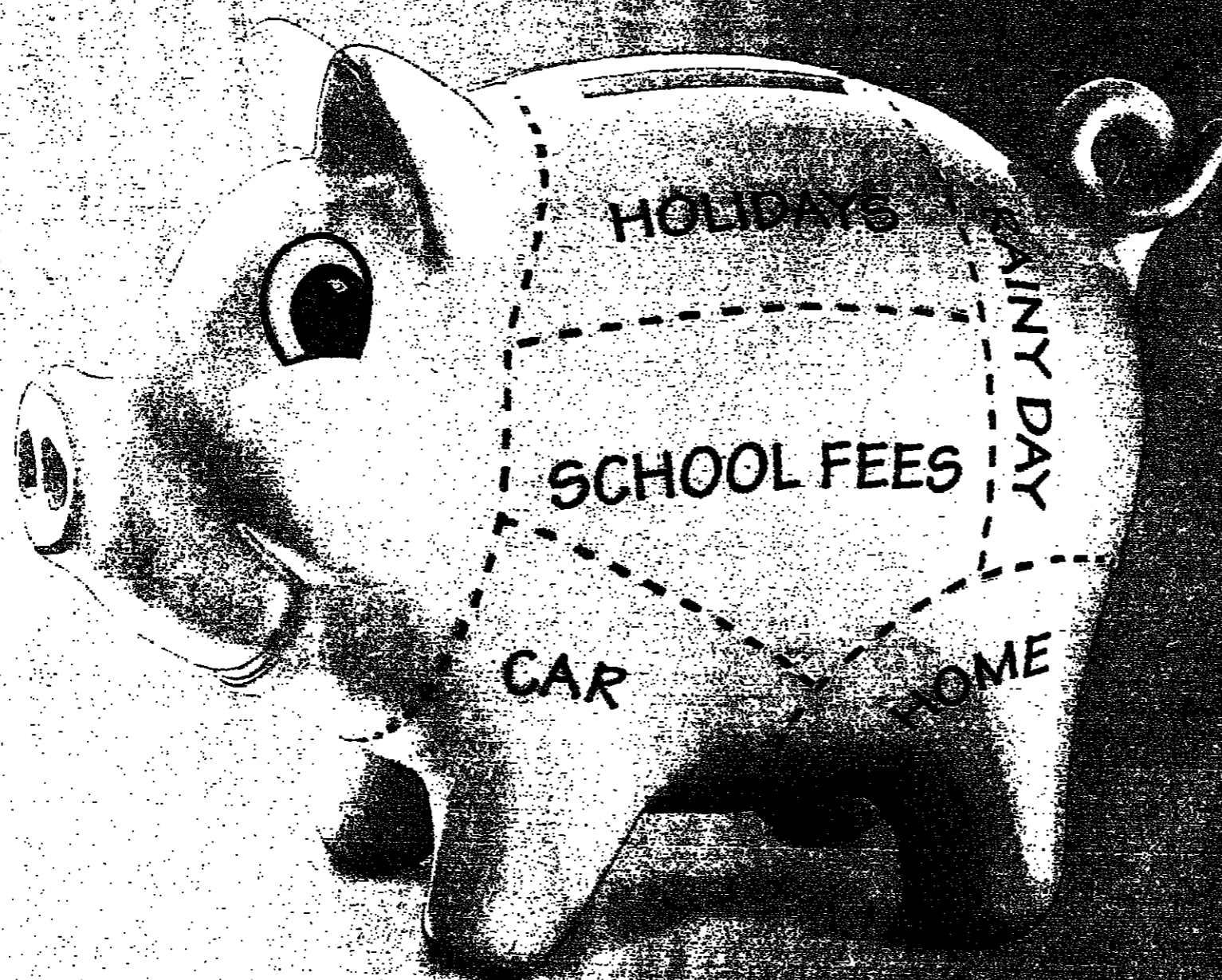
Some experts, however, fear that Velazquez's bones, even if unearthed, will be indistinguishable from others in what was probably a common ossuary. "In those days individual burials were most unusual," said one historian this week.

"Also," he added, "it was common to pound up the bones and press them down to make room for later additions."



Theory and practice: Bill Clinton, walking alongside Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, is handed a copy of the *Kama Sutra* after attending the Summit of the Americas in Santiago, Chile yesterday. Photograph: Gary Hershorn/Reuters

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Style better left in the closet

Watching (on television) the *celebrity* spectators at the Masters Golf tournament from Augusta 10 days ago, I realised with a shudder summer would soon be upon us. The shudder was in anticipation of the sartorial horrors of the American summer wardrobe: to wit, the shorts. Shorts—like Americans—come in a bewildering variety of shapes and sizes, but the chosen combination is rarely flattering. No one has ever claimed Washington as a centre of fashion or elegance; frumpish, country-come-to-town, are among the commoner criticisms. Where shorts are concerned, though, there is surely room for tougher language. Apalling cut, inappropriate, ugly, even repellent spring to mind. But it's a bold outsider who ventures to criticise the capital's dress sense. Last year, Washington's women came over all defensive about their craze for cadaverous white tights. A few months before it was their penchant for wearing trainers with their business suits which they fought to justify in the face of a newspaper columnist's onslaught.

You may just get away with criticising an American's clothes. You will not, however, survive taking on their pets, as the American Kennel Club has just found out. It has just withdrawn 10,000 copies of *The Complete Dog Book*, at an estimated cost of almost \$1m because of what it says were editorial mistakes. The most egregious of these "mistakes" was to describe 40 breeds as "not good" with children. Dog-owners and breeders were up in arms; the owners—at the insult directed at their faithful pets; the breeders—concerned no one would buy their animals. There are no "bad breeds", said one specialist, just "bad dogs". The full list of 40 is now nigh impossible to come by, but it is said to include chihuahuas, toy poodles and German shepherds.

In the past two weeks, something remarkable has happened on the route of my walk to work. An asphalted parking lot the size of a block was emptied of cars, surrounded by a fearsome metal fence, and hollowed into a massive

WASHINGTON DIARY



Mary Dejevsky

crater, with a fleet of bulldozers burrowing in its depths. More remarkable still was the appearance of company boardings at all four corners to testify that this was not your standard act of Washington vandalism, but preparation for building.

Now large construction projects, still less privately financed ones, do not come to Downtown Washington every day. "My" building site could just be a pioneering swallow for the long-desired investors' summer in a city where property values have fallen by 25 per cent in a decade.

News from the housing front seems to confirm that the Washington property market may finally be turning up. Friends with houses to sell have found buyers after one weekend at or above the asking price. The recently arrived city manager, a feisty Texan woman, has signalled her confidence (or foolhardiness) by buying a house in DC. In some areas of the capital a phenomenon is emerging: a shortage of houses for sale.

And a postscript about that film, *Primary Colours*, the fictional account of Clinton's 1992 presidential campaign whose box-office success was supposed to rival that of *Titanic*, has gone the way of the ship: not the film. While Washington enthused, the big wide world "outside the beltway" stayed at home, too bored by the President's real-life escapades to want to see them again on screen. Wise after the event, metropolitan critics claim in self-defence that the contradictory figure of the fictional president, Jack Stanton, may have been "too nuanced for a broad movie-going public". Oh yes? Maybe these simple down-home types just felt they had seen it all before.

Rights activist murdered

ASSASSINS posing as journalists killed Colombia's top human-rights attorney, Eduardo Umaña Méndez, 50, whose clients included trade unionists, jailed guerrillas, Indians and the families of the "disappeared". Police said "two men and a woman who said they ... needed to see him" killed Mr Umaña with three shots from a pistol. — Reuters, Bogotá

Canadian PM to visit Cuba

THE Canadian Prime Minister, Jean Chrétien, confirmed he will visit the Cuban president, Fidel Castro, drawing a cool response from US officials at the second Summit of the Americas, a gathering of all 34 democratically elected leaders of the Western Hemisphere. Cuba was excluded because of its Communist government.

— AP, Santiago, Chile

Austria elects a president

AUSTRIANS went to the polls yesterday to elect a president, with the incumbent, Thomas Klestil, favourite to win a second six-year term. Two female contenders pose the only real threat to him.

— Reuters, Vienna

هكذا من الأحرار

Resurgent Jews emerge from Russian ghetto

Anti-Semitism may still be common, but Jews are regaining confidence after years of oppression, reports Phil Reeves

MOSCOW — Despite decades of official prejudice, mass emigration, and a stubborn strain of anti-Semitism, Jewish culture and arts are reviving in Russia. Moscow now has at least 100 Jewish organisations, as well as a small but growing industry selling kosher food. Proof of the advances since the repressive Soviet years came earlier this year when Moscow's elite gathered to pay tribute to a man whom their society — albeit in another epoch — destroyed.

A week-long festival was held to honour Solomon Mikhoels, the Yiddish actor and director, who was considered the finest Russian performer of Shakespeare of his generation. Fifty years ago Mikhoels, the founder of the Bolshevik-era State Jewish Theatre, was run down by a car driven by the secret police, who murdered him on the orders of Stalin. January's festival was therefore seen as both celebration and communal repentance.

The resurgence of Jewish culture is everywhere evident. Promising Jewish writers — who once had to type out their work furtively as "samizdat" — are now widely published. The Sholem Theatre stages musical performances with Yiddish lyrics. Displays of Davidic dances, an ancient form of Jewish dancing, have returned to St Petersburg. "It is our responsibility to enable our Jewish people to return to consciousness, to find their historical orientation," says Roman Spector, a former dissident who now heads the Congress of Ethnic Minorities in Moscow.

In the early Nineties, Spector edited an almanac of Jewish writing, and saw the beginnings of a blossoming in the arts. "Young people were just bombarding me with stories, poems, ideas and essays," he recalls. "Seven decades of isolation is a long time. You can feel the energy of deprivation."

The upsurge has been pushed forward by the growth of Jewish education. Moscow, with a Jewish population of 300,000-500,000, has seven Jewish secondary schools and four higher education establish-

ments. A decade ago there was none. It would be wrong to assume, though, that this starburst of activity suddenly erupted when the USSR collapsed in 1991. Its beginnings are subtler. For years, the Communists sought to distract attention from their grossly discriminatory practices — including job quotas, and bugging, beating and jailing of Jewish activists — by bragging about the broad range of nationalities among their artists. Some Jews became

who said it. When no one replied, he walked off the stage. For years, dewy-eyed Russian war veterans would thump out the ballads of Iosif Kobzon. Seen as Russia's Frank Sinatra, he remains highly popular, even though he has now joined the State Duma (lower house of parliament). In a sobering reminder of Russia's anti-Semitic streak, he has said he could never occupy the Kremlin itself, even if he wanted to; his Jewish roots rule out high office.

Such views find wide agreement. The ambitious still seek to hide Jewish links: Sergei Kiriyenko, Boris Yeltsin's nominee for prime minister, has changed his name from Sergei Irsaitelom. But the cultural revival among Russian Jewry is undeniably real, fuelled by a steady return of émigrés. So, too, is its political renaissance, aided by the presence of Jews in the upper echelons of power.

The most prominent of these are the moguls Boris Berezovsky — one of the strongest forces on Boris Yeltsin — and Vladimir Gusinsky, head of the Russian Jewish Congress. Yet nasty traces of the past still lurk. Anti-Semitic jokes are commonplace, at every level. Russia has witnessed a growth in reactionary nationalist art, fertilised by a general belief that the country's Slavic culture is being destroyed by banal Western culture. Its proponents include Ilya Glazunov, whose works include a painting called *Wake up, Russia*, showing a muscle-bound young man carrying an automatic weapon in one hand and a New Testament in the other. Although his message "Russia for the Russians" painted on his instrument.

The trend, alas, is also prevalent in politics, especially on the far right. This month Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, the outspoken and popular ultra-nationalist leader, made an hour-long speech in which he blamed Jews for starting the Second World War. No one was remotely surprised.

celebrities, although the price was the risk of being used as a tool for Soviet propaganda. Mikhoels was used by the Kremlin as a cultural mouthpiece until Stalin turned on him. Among the most renowned performers was the stand-up comedian Arkady Raykin, who died in 1992 after dominating Russian satire for 40 years. But his fame was not without problems. There was a notorious occasion in Ukraine when someone in the audience shouted "shid" (yid). With considerable courage, he interrupted his show, and demanded to know

Boris Berezovsky and Vladimir Gusinsky: Jews in upper echelons of power



In harmony: Boris Yeltsin's wife, Naina, (centre) being applauded for her performance on the Japanese harp at a hotel in Kawana yesterday, as Kumiko Hashimoto (left), wife of Japan's Prime Minister, joins in. Photograph: AP

Yeltsins make friends in Japan

KAWANA (Reuters) — Boris Yeltsin and Ryutaro Hashimoto, the Japanese Prime Minister, ended a summit yesterday that kept an improvement in relations between their countries on track but left unresolved a territorial dispute left over from the Second World War.

The summit showed that the Russian President, 67, who has often been written off as too old, ill and out of touch to lead his country, is still a force to be reckoned with. Nor did Mr Yeltsin's aides have to scramble to correct any gaffes.

The two leaders kept momentum going in trying to solve the territorial issue over the Kurile islands, north of the Japanese island of Hokkaido, which Soviet forces captured at the end of the war. The two sides put forward a proposal formally to end the old hostilities by signing a peace treaty by 2000. Such a treaty has been held up for 53 years by Japan's demand that Russia return the four islands, known in Japan as the Northern Territories.

"In our personal relationship we already have a peace treaty," Mr Yeltsin said.

Priests sentenced to death for Rwanda massacre

KIGALI (AP) — A court in Rwanda has sentenced two Roman Catholic priests to death for organising the execution of 2,000 people during the 1994 genocide of the country's Tutsi minority.

The Tutsis had sought shelter in a Catholic church, only to be crushed to death by bulldozers.

Jean François Kayiranga and Edouard Nkurikiye are the first clergy members to be convicted of offences connected with the state-sponsored massacres, which resulted in the deaths of about half a million Tutsis.

Apart from the killings at Nyange, the two priests, believed to belong to the Hutu majority, were charged with involvement in another "church massacre" in Nyundo, 10 miles east of the border town of Gisenyi, although it

was not clear from radio reports what role they played in the massacres.

Priests and church officials in Rwanda are known to have collaborated with the Hutu militants who perpetrated the massacres in 1994, often luring people to seek shelter in churches and then leaving them to the killers.

Sentence was passed on the clergymen by a court in Kibuye, 45 miles west of the capital, Kigali, Radio Rwanda said.

Frederic Mutagwera, head of Rwanda's Bar Association, said the convictions were evidence that the Church shared moral responsibility for the genocide. "The priests were preaching peace, unity and harmony

among the people, and then they took up machetes to slaughter people," he said. "That is the moral responsibility of the Church."

The Pope has issued no apology for the Church's role in the carnage, although he has said those in the Church who played a role in the genocide should face the consequences.

About half of Rwanda's 7.2 million people are Catholic. The Anglican Church, whose members are a minority in Rwanda, has apologised for its silence during the genocide.

The killings stopped when Tutsi rebels ousted a Hutu-led government. Since then, Rwanda has convicted more than 300 people on genocide charges.

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TIME COMPUTER SYSTEMS

The computer too weird for Einstein

Quantum maths could bring the next giant leap forward in programming, says Charles Arthur

THE problem with modern computers is that they're so slow – and also that their potential for improvement is so limited. This may not seem obvious as you gaze at machines running at hundreds of megahertz – that is, performing hundreds of millions of instructions every second – but to computer scientists, it's a source of real frustration.

What's more, as modern trends in miniaturisation continue, in about 20 years microprocessors will simultaneously hit many physical limits: a transistor will be one atom wide, a memory cell will have just one electron per bit, and the cost of the factory to make it will equal the economic output of the planet. (Worse still, it probably won't employ us all.)

Some scientists are seeking the answers by trying to design "quantum computers" which simultaneously use the properties of atomic nuclei and of cups of coffee. And earlier this month new research showed that they are moving towards a breakthrough that could be as significant as the invention of the transistor 51 years ago.

Quantum computers are an exciting prospect. If you could build one, it would be exponentially faster than a classical computer on some problems. Take the problem of finding the factors of a 100-digit number – something that number theorists find interesting, as do banks and security agencies, because such numbers form the basis of modern cryptography.

Finding such a number's factors would take a conventional supercomputer about 10¹⁰ years; when you consider that the universe has only existed for 10¹⁰ years.

However, on a quantum computer using as many mol-

ecules as comfortably fit in a coffee mug, you could find the answer in about 20 minutes.

Why does it take the conventional machine so long? Because it attacks the sum head-on, trying first one answer, then the next, then the next. In the microprocessor, data is stored as discrete bits – zeroes and ones. Each overall collection of bits is described as a "state"; the machine progresses from one state to the next, according to preset algorithms. Finally, it arrives at a state which matches the answer. If reaching that has taken centuries of calculation – tough.

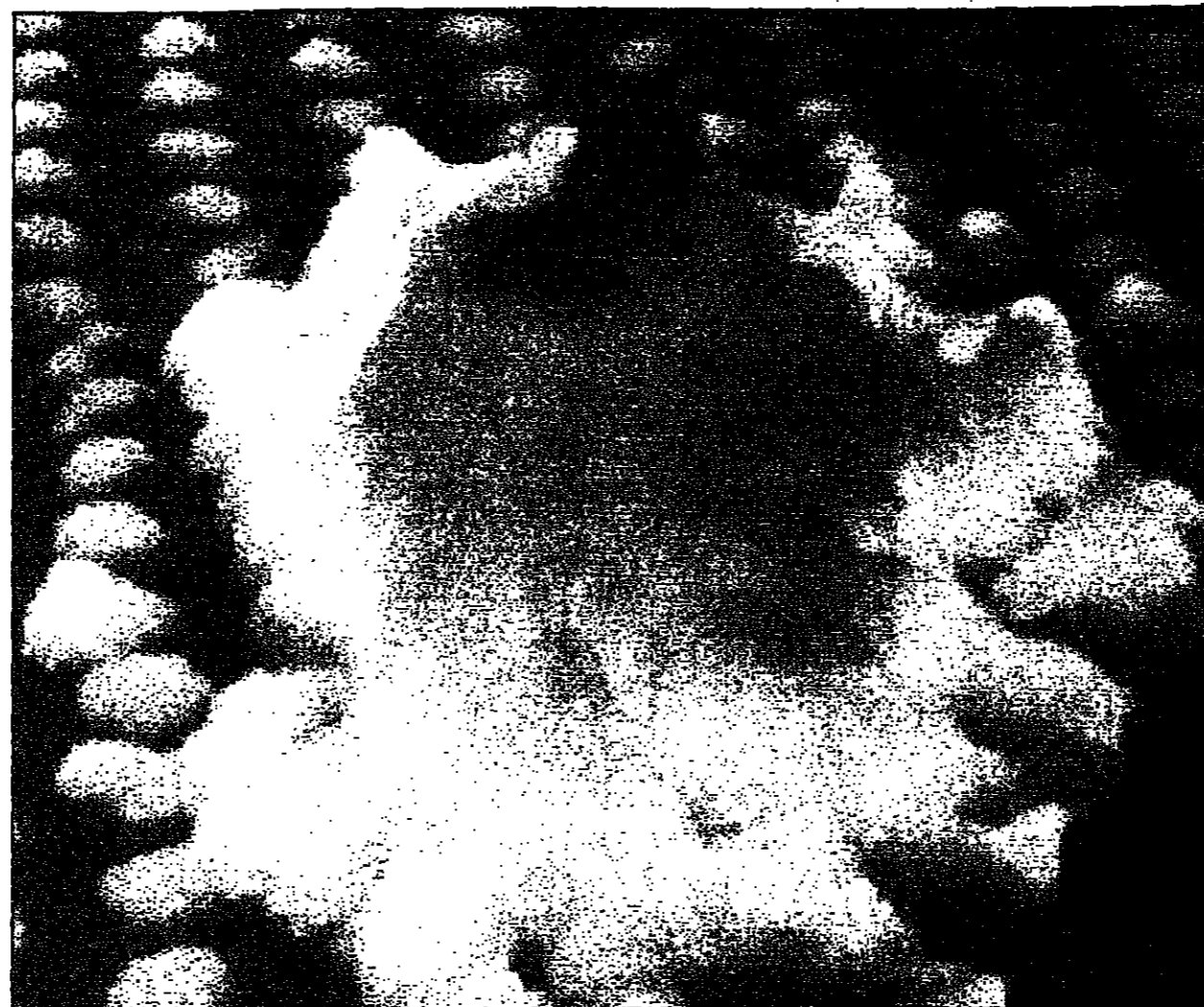
However, in 1985 the physicist Richard Feynman proposed another approach: use the bizarre behaviour of the quantum world, where every calculation is performed simultaneously. Set up your quantum computer, and it will find the correct answer in a fraction of the time that a conventional one will.

How? According to the mathematics that Feynman developed in his most insightful work, on the theories of quantum chromodynamics (QCD) and quantum electrodynamics (QED) – about what happens in the quantum world of electrons, neutrons, protons, muons and the other inhabitants of the world we cannot see – a quantum particle doesn't just cross a room. It follows every possible path across the room, with ghost electrons tracing uncountable numbers of paths to reach the destination where you, the observer, detect the arrival of one electron.

So, Feynman suggested, why not use that quantum property to build a computer? It would explore the many computational states that a conventional machine does, but simultaneously. It would arrive at the answer as quickly as you could pose the problem and measure the output.

All that's required is to store bits using particles instead of transistors. Your quantum bits – "qubits" – could be defined by the "spin" of a proton, say, which can be "up" or "down" – like the 0 and 1 of a conventional computer.

The neat thing about your



Computer future: A scanning tunnelling micrograph of gold atoms aggregated on a granite substrate. In a few years the working 'parts' of computers will be no bigger than this

Photograph: Philippe Pilly/Science Photo Library

quantum machine though is that instead of being stuck at 0 or 1, your qubits are simultaneously 0 and 1 – they are "superposed" in that state, until you measure them.

It was this aspect of the quantum world that Albert Einstein found so frustrating, leading to his complaint that "God does not play dice": he was sure that the particles must be in one state or the other. Yet until somebody "observes" them, they are in neither state... and both.

Say your quantum computer consists of two nuclei: each nucleus has its own spin, so you have two qubits. That means there are four possible states (up-up, up-down, down-up, down-down): so your two-qubit machine can find the solution to a problem with four possible answers.

With three qubits, there are eight possible states. With 32, there are 4 billion possible states – all superposed, all available simultaneously to find the answer to the problem you set. But, you say, tackling the factors of a 100-digit number requires something with 10¹⁰ states. That's fine – all it takes is 333 qubits. That means 333 molecules – and there's no

shortage of those. A cup of coffee, for example, contains about 10²⁴ molecules.

So all you have to do is set your quantum computer up and, crucially, ensure that you don't "observe" the qubits before your calculation is complete – because the act of observation destroys the superposition. Many efforts are

other that of a carbon atom, both in a molecule of chloroform.

Of course, they couldn't isolate a single molecule in their beaker. Instead, they focussed on groups of molecules, which stood out by having an excess of one spin value or the other. This excess is about 1 in a mil-

In about 20 years microprocessors will hit many physical limits: a transistor will be one atom wide, a memory cell will have just one electron per bit

underway to develop real quantum computers. The latest success has come from the team of Neil Gershenfeld of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Isaac Chuang of IBM's Almaden Research Center in San Jose, California.

In work reported in the journal *Physical Review Letters*, they have demonstrated a two-qubit quantum computer: one qubit was the nucleus of a hydrogen atom, the

lition – sufficient to pick out using nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR), the super-sensitive technique that puts molecules into a magnetic field and aims pulses of radio waves at them.

Depending on the arrangement of their spins, the molecules react in different ways. These groups of molecules acted like multiple copies of a single quantum computer: by manipulating the NMR pulses to "instruct" them or "inter-

gate" them, enough of the groups would work in concert to function as a working system.

They succeeded, though the effort required to synthesize the two-qubit machine was heroic. And after all that, it was only about to answer, in effect, two questions about one of four numbers – like saying "Which of 1, 2, 3 and 4 is odd and greater than 2?" If that sounds modest, their first machine – built in 1997 – managed to add 1 and 1. Next, they are looking to build larger machines: they have their sights on a ten-qubit machine that could find the factors of 15.

That might make it sound as though quantum machines the size of your hand which can crack codes in instants are centuries away. But don't forget that the first transistor was a huge object which took years to build – but that now, the transistor is the cheapest and smallest consumer item on earth, with 6 million fitting on a chip that costs about £60. Quantum computers could yet have their day.

For more information and references on quantum computing, try <http://jgorman.stanford.edu/jqcomp/NMRQC/turning.html>

TECHNOQUEST

Raspberry seeds/Space junk/Green grass/Boot origins/Optical info

Questions for this column may be submitted via e-mail to sci.net@campus.bt.com

Q How many seeds does a raspberry have?

A raspberry flower has numerous carpels arranged in a spiral, and every carpel has two ovules in it. The fruit is a compound structure and every drupelet (the succulent, lumpy bit) in it has a single seed. The actual number of seeds will depend both on the size of the whole compound fruit and on the size of the individual drupelets/fruitlets that comprise it. So a large fruit with many small drupelets will have many more seeds than a small fruit with a few large drupelets. On a reasonably vigorous plant with medium-sized fruits there will be about 50 seeds/drupelets.

Q How much rubbish is there floating in space?

The bits of old satellites and rockets that orbit the Earth are a serious problem. There are about 7,000 major objects orbiting the Earth and only about 100 of them are still working. There are also 40,000 smaller bits and pieces, mainly debris of exploded rockets. Then there are over three million particles, such as flakes of paint, specks of insulation and exhaust fumes. The Mir space station and the Space Shuttle have been hit by flakes of paint which have – at a speed of 18,000mph plus – pitted the windows. Collisions with "space junk" are now a hazard for satellites, rockets and astronauts alike.

Q Why is grass green?

Grass is full of a substance called chlorophyll, which plants use to convert light into energy. Sunlight is composed of many different colours: the chlorophyll absorbs all of it except the green wavelengths, which are reflected back to your eye – so you perceive grass as green. As long as the plant is living and healthy, it should remain green.

Q When was the wellington boot invented?

Legend has it that the wellington boot was specifically invented for the Duke of Wellington, but it is more likely he just popularised the style. The first wellington boots were leather and used at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. The first company to sell rubber wellies started in 1865, but in 1857 Mr Lockington patented a boot made of rubber and leather.

Q Do badgers hibernate?

No – they even give birth in January.

Q Why does salt make you thirsty?

When salt crystals, which have a very orderly structure, get the chance to dissolve in water they take it – because the level of disorder (or "entropy") increases when the crystals become disordered ions in water. The drop in entropy when salt dissolves is much greater than for many other things – so salt preferentially takes water from other chemicals or states. Thus salt in your mouth or stomach sucks water from your bloodstream. This triggers sensors in the brain, which alert you that there's less water in your blood circulation. In other words, you feel thirsty.

Q How is the information that reaches the eyes transmitted to the brain?

The photoreceptor cells are linked to a set of nerve cells in the retina, called bipolar cells. These link with a second type of nerve cell called ganglion cells – whose axons take information from the eyes to the brain. The ganglion cells are bundled together to form the optic nerve.

We cannot see an object whose image falls on the retina at the point where the optic nerve leaves the eye. It contains no receptor cells, so any light striking this small area is not picked up. This is why we call it the blind spot.

You can also visit the technoquest World Wide Web site at <http://www.sciencenet.org.uk>

Questions and answers provided by Science Line's Dial-a-Scientist on 0345 600444

THEORETICALLY

IS HIV this sneaky?

The virus that causes AIDS, may head straight for the gut early on in infection – which could mean that research into ways to fight it has been looking in the wrong place. According to new research published in *Science*, tests on monkeys show that SIV, their version of HIV, destroys immune cells in the intestines first, before it goes on to the blood and the lymph glands.

Andrew Lackner, Ronald Desrosiers and colleagues at Harvard Medical School said their finding could solve one of the big mysteries of HIV: researchers have long suspected that it "hides out" somewhere in the body, gathering strength, before launching an all-out assault on the immune system. But where? Most had looked at the lymph glands and peripheral blood systems. The Harvard team injected macaques with SIV and checked for signs of infection. Within a week, the virus had depleted the CD4 immune cells in the intestines, they found. They stayed down for months.

"In marked contrast, there were minimal changes in the percentage of CD4 lymphocytes in the blood, spleen and lymph nodes from these same animals at the same time points," they wrote. "Also, there were more virus-infected cells in the intestine than in the peripheral lymphoid tissues."

Barbara Fox, the company's head of immunology, said the vaccine had shown good results in rats. But will it stop the rats hanging around on the streets?

Bunsen burners can melt steel, if you tweak them correctly, even though they can't ordinarily melt copper. British inventors Drax Torch have remodelled the ordinary lab bench model so that it preheats the gas and air, lights it and then concentrates it in a more intense flame. The big advantage? Propane fuel is 20 times cheaper than acetylene – making this an ideal application for scrap working in developing countries.

That Harvard team is the

same one that wants to try a "live" HIV vaccine on human volunteers. But though their announcement made many headlines around the world,

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THE trials of waiting for a bus are often made worse by two things – even apart from the bloke with the noisy Walkman who insists on standing next to you. First, they always seem to arrive in groups of three, with each delegation interspersed by huge delays. Second, if the route in the other direction passes on the other side of the road, there are always more buses going that way. Why?

Such everyday observations do have a real basis in life, as is explained in a new book called *Why Do Buses Come In Threes?* by Rob Eastway and Jeremy Wyndham.

The blame for the bunching of buses does not, despite what you might think, lie with the bus company or even the drivers. It is with us, the passengers.

Why? Being sensible, the bus company sends its buses out at regular intervals to journey around a fixed set of stops. Times will have been arranged so that the arrival times for different stops cater for variations in traffic.

But the passengers are not so thoughtful. They arrive at bus stops essentially at random. That means that at some point on the route there will come a point where there is a burst of passengers who all want to get on. The bus trying to pick them up will be slowed down (even

Why buses always come in threes...



if it has a conductor). The bus behind it will start to catch up.

Because the first bus has been slowed, more people have the chance to arrive at the stops further up the route. The first bus is slowed down even more. Eventually, the second bus catches up, because the first bus has been "sweeping" the route clean. Even if the second bus then overtakes the first, it will run into the passengers that the delayed first bus would

have picked up. It gets slowed down too. Stopping either bus (to create a proper gap) isn't practical – that annoys the passengers (sorry, "customers") on it.

All these delays mean that any third bus on the route will start catching up the other pair. With a long enough route, you'll eventually find a parade of three buses towards the end.

And why is it that there are more buses going in the other

direction? Because you only notice them when you're waiting for yours. Once you're on board your bus, you stop looking for those coming in the other direction – apart perhaps to notice another group of three.

Charles Arthur, Science and Technology Editor

Why Do Buses Come In Threes? is published 30 April by Robson Books, price £12.95.

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Looking for the best — for free

Parents can face difficult choices when the state school near home isn't 'good enough', says Jack O'Sullivan

AS STATE schools reopen this week, expect mild hysteria to be breaking out in some quarters. If you haven't found a good school for your child for the next academic year, you are in trouble. The problem is a dire shortage of good school places. It's acute around the country, notably in Bristol, Kingston-upon-Thames and Hertfordshire. But the situation is particularly bad in London. What do you do if you want a state education for your child when, down at the local comprehensive, only a minority manage what was five O level passes in the old money?

It's a problem that has not just preoccupied Tony Blair and half the Cabinet. It is also the chief topic of conversation among legions of left-leaning parents, keen to back state education and save themselves the thousands of pounds required by a private alternative.

So what do you do? The Riders moved. "We have

spent years agonising about the issue," says Robert Rider, who has three children under ten.

"They are in primary school in Islington and there have been lots of reports of problems with secondary schools either of an academic nature or because of bullying or some other issue. Additionally it is difficult to find a mixed secondary. We left last year and I'm glad we did. In the final year of primary school, year six, when they are ten coming up to 11, everyone starts to panic."

Mr Rider, a film programme consultant at the Barbican, is a life-long Labour party member. His wife, Sue, teaches in a state school. "We are committed to the state system," says Robert. "We couldn't afford private education even if we wanted to use it."

Finding the right area was not easy. The few good comprehensives in London are in such demand that they have tiny catchment areas. Some families lie or borrow the address of friends. Others rent a house nearby and return home only when their child is safely ensconced.

The Riders moved house to Muswell Hill, inside the catchment area of Fortismere School, a mixed state comprehensive with an excellent reputation.

"We're privileged in being able to move," says Mr Rider.

Jane Henderson and Edward Mawby have taken even more drastic action. They have aban-

doned London to educate Max, 12, William, 9, and Oscar, 6. Outside the catchment area for good comprehensives, they dismissed trying the few selective secondaries, such as Latymer in outer London, which choose children by highly competitive examination from all over the capital. "It can be a one-and-a-half hour journey by bus and train into a bleak part of London,"

says Jane Henderson. They moved to Lewes, five miles from the Sussex coast, home to a large bohemian, artistic community, with little cash, but lots of academic aspiration.

The reputation of the two main mixed comprehensives — Priory School and Ringmer — is responsible for a large exodus of middle-aged professionals from London.

"We never wanted to spend that huge amount of money on schooling," says Jane Henderson. "But we might have been pushed into it. We wouldn't sacrifice our children's education to be politically correct and keep them in state schools."

The flight from the capital is repeated many times over with families typically heading for places like Oxford, Cambridge and other two market towns. But, it is not always a success. Julia Hill and her three children, aged 10, 7, and 4, left Haringey in north London 18 months ago and settled in north Oxford.

Her target was Cherwell, a highly-regarded comprehensive. She still thinks that she has made the right choice, but with one proviso. She wishes she had delayed it for a couple of years to benefit from London's good education for younger children. "There is no proper funding or subsidy for play groups in my area, whereas in Haringey the facilities were brilliant," says Ms Hill. "At the age of ten, my daughter finds herself in a school of 600, with 160 other ten year olds. The staff seem ineffective and it's much harder to get attention for special needs. Looking back now, the teachers in her old school had an almost messianic

feel about them in their ability to inspire and enthuse."

So is there an alternative to moving? One answer is to make your children do the travelling. Sue Ostmo sent her daughter Chloe to Latymer School in the Edmonton in north London suburbs, for from their inner city home in Stoke Newington.

"She could avail herself of fantastic orchestras, learn Latin and

school, because his reading is so poor that she fears he would have no chance of winning a place at 11 either at a selective secondary or a good independent school. So Julian is driven everyday to a better state school several miles away in Islington. The hope is that he will eventually pass the exam for Latymer.

The circus of moving house or children has proved too much for Sharon Plant, an independent arts consultant and her husband, Steven Penny, director of a sales promotions company.

She and her husband, who live in Islington, considered putting their son, Jack, 11, and daughter, Ruby, 9, up for exams at London's selective secondaries.

"I lost interest when I discovered that they would have a walk, a bus and train ride and then another walk. For an 11-year-old in the dark September term that seemed such hard work. In any case, the schools we were interested in had more than 2,000 applicants — for 180 places in one, 90 in the other. Jack could have been the brightest child, but had a cold that day and failed."

Their solution? The one being taken by many, even left-wing, parents who can scrape together the money. They have gone private, paying nearly £7,000 a year for Jack to attend Forest School in Walthamstow.

"We would have preferred them to stay in the state sector," she says. "We weren't expecting much, not swimming pools, just decent O and A level grades. We were both educated in good state schools. Sadly the local area had nothing to offer."

To get into a the desired school some families lie or borrow the address of friends

Greek, and generally enjoy a much broader range of subjects," says her mother, a single parent. "The expectation is that the children will do well. I was looking for a school which could help to be another parent. A school which a young person really wanted to go to." But there was a price to pay. Every day, a walk to the railway station, then a train journey across London and another walk at the other end. And your friends don't live just around the corner.

Last year, Chloe, now 17, gave up her train journey and switched to a sixth-form college. But even then, the family could not find anything suitable locally. So she cycles across town to north-west London.

Meanwhile, Sue Ostmo has had to remove her youngest child Julian, 9, from the local junior



Crossing town: Sue Ostmo sends her children Chloe, 17, and Julian, 9, to schools far from their home in Stoke Newington
Photograph: Kalpesh Lathiga

Winning a church school place would be heavenly

Paddy Burt thought wooing her vicar was the sure-fire way to ensure C of E education

WHEN you've been brought up as a nice, middle-class girl, the chances are you'll rebel. I don't regret my revolts or hating my snobby girls' day school, though I still remember the indignation I felt at not being allowed to bring home any girls my mother deemed suitable. She meant scholarship girls.

So it wasn't surprising that when it was time for my own daughter to leave her cosy local primary, the last thing I wanted for her was a posh girls' school. Comprehensive seemed the answer, yet a comprehensive had different drawbacks. A colleague, who had sent her son to the local mixed one, reported a conversation she'd had with his maths teacher on open night. "I've seen your son only once this term," he said. She discovered he had been truanting regularly, only no one had told her.

What I wanted was for my daughter to mix with all kinds of children but, no, I did not want her to mix with tearaways. There must, I reasoned, be a grown-up version of her local Church of England primary. A state school with Latin on the syllabus! And although the school's philosophy was essentially Christian, even I, as a committed non-Christian, could see the religious element was the opposite of oppressive.

As we trawled round the various secondary schools, we discovered the only ones run along disciplined lines were CoE schools. I even began to wonder slightly desperately if there was something to Christianity after all. But there was a catch. Unlike CoE primaries, CoE secondaries have a rule that pupils and their fam-

lies must attend church regularly. I brushed this stumbling block aside by assuming that, when the time came, I would be able to charm a vicar into signing a form saying we were regulars.

The dream of the perfect, non-elitist school eventually materialised. Greycoat Hospital in Westminster was a 300-year-old CoE girls' comprehensive with a strict headmistress who insisted on streaming, Latin, and school uniform. (Nowadays the school admits 15 girls who have passed a language test which exempts them from having to prove they're practising Christians; Harriet Harman has just got her 11-year-old daughter accepted via this route).

The following Sunday I dragged my husband and daughter along to the parish church in the high street with the aim of asking the vicar when the time came to fill in the form. Later, over the tinkling of coffee cups, the vicar asked if I would read next Sunday's lesson. He must have seen the

What I wanted was for my daughter to mix with all kinds of children, but not with tearaways

hunted look in my eyes because he tried to jolly me along — perhaps he assumed I was nervous? Guilt assailed me, but there was only one answer: yes.

After that, I read the lesson regularly and prayed for a belief in God to swoop down from heaven and convince me, yet how hard with a vicar whose name was Brian and whose eyes, I felt, should not be twinkling at me quite so roguishly behind his specs.

Three months later, the school asked for the proof of attendance form. Clutching it, I went to Brian's house in the next street. I had

come to like him and this only increased my sense of guilt. Looking at the form, he solemnly said: "You've been coming to us for six months haven't you?" and as I fumbled for a reply with a modicum of truth to it, he winked.

I was shaken rigid. This was a vicar, a holy man, who was aware that six months wasn't the same as three. I thanked him and fled. Perhaps feeling he had done his bit and deserved something in return, Brian mentioned to the deacon that I was a journalist and I was invited to an evening with the deaconess at her house on the common. There, I found myself agreeing to write various pieces, including interviewing a bishop, for their magazine.

Well, I interviewed the bishop and it was a success. Having now done something positive to contribute, I knew it was time to extricate myself. I wrote to Brian, explaining how I had hoped that coming to his church would inspire me with a belief in God, but that it hadn't worked out. I was sorry, I said, and wished that things had turned out differently.

God got his revenge. I deserved it, but my daughter, who had settled into her new school, didn't. Her headmistress became ill and within six months, was dead. She was replaced by her deputy who abolished streaming. The school went downhill. A new headmistress was appointed, a fat lady who wore black leather mini-skirts and was sacked for having an affair with one of the school governors. It was all in the News of the World.

By now my daughter had become as bolshie as I had once been, despising the school friends I liked, being best friends with those I couldn't stand and becoming a dedicated clubber at 14, arriving home by minicab at four in the morning.

As for those high-minded principles I'd nurtured about her mixing with all kinds of children, those went. We got her into a school in the private sector.



Moving out: Jane Henderson and Edward Mawby moved to Lewes for better schooling for their children (left to right) Max, 12, Oscar, 6, and William, 9
Photograph: Andrew Hasson

coming up



From 'wacky beer' to St George's Day ...every Monday a quirky look at the week ahead

Taking the biscuit

World Cup hype really gets going in earnest this week with the launch of Sainsbury's range of cup goodies. The chain, which apparently has an exclusive arrangement with the Football Association making it "The Official England Supermarket", is introducing World Cup ginger bread men, soccer sausages and a host of other patriotic goodies, including world cup toilet roll. The white lavatory paper features the official England kit and a spokeswoman claims it is of the finest and softest quality. At the other end of the scale, designer Louis Vuitton, best known for hand-bags and luggage, is launching a £280 designer football made from the highest quality leather. The company reckons the special-edition balls will become collector's items.

Beating the cheats

From one great sporting event to the next, the London Marathon takes place at the weekend. This year, all contenders are being forced to wear a hi-tech microchip on their shoes. The device, appropriately named the ChampionChip, will be read each time the runner passes over mats that have been strategically placed at various points along the route. Organisers claim the idea is to allow broadcasters to have regular up-dates and keep an accurate record time of every competitor. But cynics have put a more sinister interpretation on their introduction. The real truth behind the chips, they believe, is to put an end to the devious antics of the marathon cheat. These are the naughty people who start the race, then sneak off to the pub for a few hours before ordering a cab to within a mile of the finish line and sprinting to the end with a smug grin on their face.

Celebrate by George!



One man who would surely never have stooped to such underhand tactics is the valiant St George who celebrates his special day on Thursday. In recent years poor George has been the victim of great neglect with barely a glass being raised in his honour anywhere. But this year, the English Tourist Board promises, our patron saint will get the celebration he deserves. St George's day, they suggest, will be big enough to make St Patrick's day seem like a funeral. So what, you may wonder, have they organised? A nationwide network of street parties, boasting extravagant dancing, a feast of traditional cuisine and barrel loads of England's finest ales? Err...no. There's a "name the dragon" tournament on the Humber Bridge, a dragon poem competition in Coalville and a tea and coffee morning with dragon biscuits at Ivybridge.

Spliffing brew

The annual Pub, Club and Leisure Show at London's Olympia promises much, much more with the launch of a new ale called "wacky beer." The first beverage of its kind, it is made from the hemp plant but its makers insist it is totally legal because it comes from the male species and not the "naughty" female one. Although it boasts no mind-altering properties beyond the traditional ones associated with beer, it is apparently very healthy and contains lots of vitamins absent from more traditional brands.

THE INDEPENDENT

EDITOR: ROSIE BOYCOTT; EDITOR IN CHIEF: ANDREW MARR
DEPUTY EDITOR: CHRIS BLACKHURST
ADDRESS: 1 CANADA SQUARE, CANARY WHARF, LONDON E14 5DL
TELEPHONE 0171 293 2000 OR 0171 345 2000
FAX: 0171 293 2435 OR 0171 345 2435
THE INDEPENDENT ON THE INTERNET: WWW.INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Opening up the party war chests

PHYLLIS BOWMAN seems an unlikely heroine for liberals. She founded the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child and now, in her seventies, continues to press her monochrome moral view on the world. New evidence that footnotes can "learn" at 20 weeks old? Call Mrs Bowman to say that abortion is wrong. The Prime Minister spotted going to Mass? Call Mrs Bowman to condemn him as a hypocrite for voting 13 times against restricting abortion.

But two months ago, she won a court victory that should matter to all liberals, and to liberal democracy itself. The issue – unlikely though it may seem – is that of party funding, currently the subject of an inquiry by Lord Neill's committee on standards in public life. She had been prosecuted after the 1992 election for distributing leaflets setting out the position on abortion of all the candidates in Halifax. It is a criminal offence for anyone not authorised by a party agent to spend more than £5 during a general election campaign to promote a particular candidate.

She claimed her right to free speech had been infringed, and took her case to Strasbourg. Now, six years after the "crime" was committed, the court has ruled that British electoral law contravenes the European Convention on Human Rights. Article 10 guarantees the right to freedom of expression, which "shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority".

Now this rather puts the cat among the pigeons of easy liberal assumptions. Just before the Bowman verdict, *The Independent* congratulated Lord Neill for advocating a national limit on election spending by parties and for his robust dismissal of the many practical objections.

Now the Bowman case requires a rethink about the principle. If it is wrong – and it is – to stop a lone SPUC activist from putting leaflets through all the doors in Halifax calling Alice Mahon, the pro-choice Labour candidate who won the seat, a baby-murderer, then it is wrong to stop any individual or group from campaigning for or against any candidate or party. And then the idea of a limit on election spending becomes unenforceable. Because it would be wrong to prevent a third party, such as SPUC or the Transport and General Workers or the Tony Blair Fan Club, from spending money to support or oppose candidates or parties, but at legal arms length from them.

To impose limits on either giving or receiving money will only result in a political system like the American one, which has complex rules limiting direct donations, but which is not noticeably free from the corrosive effects of big money. "Political action committees" would spring up to receive excess donations and to spend them on the causes the donors first thought of, but technically outside the control of the parties.

This week, the Neill committee will take evidence from Martin Bell, whose views on cleaning up politics we generally support – indeed, it would be a forgivable mistake to think he had been elected to Parliament under this newspaper's colours. But when he proposes that no party should be allowed to receive more than £20,000 from any one individual, company or trade union, the committee should stop and think of Mrs Bowman.

The committee should go back to first principles. It only exists because British politics had been poisoned by the fact that voters did not know where much of the money was coming from. Therefore, people did not know if government policy might have been bought, or if favours might be being returned.

Lord Neill has already decided what should be done about that: a ban on foreign donations, and anyone who makes a political donation of more than £1,000 should be identified, and identified immediately.

That alone is a very great change, which will do much to wash away the cynicism which has disfigured politics in this country. But the committee should recognise that it has been side-tracked by the issue of campaign spending limits. The red herring was introduced by Mr Blair, when he was tripped up on the involuntary premature disclosure of Bernie Ecclestone's £1m donation. He claimed innocently that he had been forced to prostitute himself to rich business people to secure a "level playing field" for the Labour Party, which had always been outspent in the past by the Conservatives, able to pull down huge sums of money from assorted fugitives, foreigners and fraudsters.

It is indeed unfair that a party which has historically advanced the interests of poorer people should be poorer than one which has tended to do better by the rich. But trying to cap giving and spending is not only illiberal, as Mrs Bowman has demonstrated, it will not help, as the American example shows. The only comfort for Labour is that many rich people's millions were utterly wasted last year putting up silly posters of weeping lions.

The best guard against the emergence of a culture of corporate government is transparency. As long as we all know where the money is coming from, all the pressures in the system will be against vested interests and in favour of a better, more accountable democracy.

Fog on the Downs

THE SOUTH DOWNS, the 50 miles of chalk hills that run from Eastbourne to Winchester, are not to be made a National Park after all. As we report today, Countryside Commission officials have decided, and commissioners are expected to rubber-stamp the decision on Thursday. But the decision poses some intriguing questions about countryside policy. Have the Downs been rejected just because they are not hilly – enough? Is it because the landscape is not "natural" enough – that is, wild with sheep on? In which case, why should it, instead, be designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty? Or perhaps the bureaucrats have a cunning plan to protect the Downs from crisp-packet-droppers and car-door picnickers – all too easily attracted by the official NP designation?

Whatever the reason, the countryside needs as much protection as possible and Michael Maecher, the unlikely success as a green minister, should take his courage in both hands and reject the commission's decision.



MILES KINGSTON

TODAY I bring you another extract from *Brief Tables*, the forgotten Noel Coward play set aboard the *Titanic*. The story so far is that Maxim and Chloe, on their honeymoon, have run into Albert, Chloe's first husband, who has reappeared after being presumed dead at the North Pole. Maxim and Chloe are reclining on the first-class deck, admiring the sunset and wondering if Albert's return will affect their marriage...

Maxim: You never actually divorced Albert, did you?
Chloe: I had no idea he was alive. To divorce a dead husband seems a little extreme. People might think I was being critical of him behind his back.

Maxim: In retrospect, it would have been wiser. He would have come back from the dead a free man, unmarried. As it is, he has turned you into a bigamist.

Chloe: No, he hasn't. It is you who did that, on the day you married me.

Maxim: So you accuse me of bigamy?
Chloe: Not at all. I am the bigamist. YOU are merely married to a bigamist.

Maxim: Poor child. Tell me, what is it like having two husbands?

Chloe: Not unpleasant. It is rather like having two quite different children.

Maxim: Are you trying to tell me you also have offspring I don't know about?

Chloe: Oh, don't let's bicker like this! We are here to enjoy a magical honeymoon on the maiden voyage of the *Titanic*. Just because I am married to someone else on board as well, you shouldn't get upset...

Why don't we go for a walk?

Maxim: In fact, I did go for a long stroll this morning, while you were applying your make-up. The ship is immense. I never expected to get blisters on an ocean cruise. It is so far from how to stern that the weather is appreciably different at the other end of the ship.

Chloe: In what way?

Maxim: It's further south, and thus much warmer.

Chloe: That sounds lovely.

Maxim: And what makes it seem even longer is that you walk from class to class, down from first through second to steerage, just as if one were going on a motoring trip through Eastern Europe. Why, there are parts of the steerage where nobody speaks English at all. Next time I go rambling on this ship, I shall take an interpreter with me.

Enter Albert, Chloe's first husband.

Albert: Hello, you two! How's the honeymoon going?

Chloe: Albert! That is a question you must never ask a woman!

Albert: Not even if you are married to her? Come on, you can tell me!

Maxim: You seem in a very jolly mood, Albert. I may call you Albert, may I not?

Albert: Of course. Fact is, I am always ill at ease away from the polar regions. This evening I can smell ice in the air. That

makes me happier.

Maxim: The only ice I ever have beneath my nose is the ice in a gin and tonic. It has the same effect on me. And it is far cheaper than mounting a polar expedition.

Chloe: Well, it is nice to see you two getting on so well.

Maxim: We have a lot in common.

Albert: The same wife.

Maxim: The same taste in women.

Chloe: Oh, for heaven's sake, stop going on about both being married to me! It is so dreary.

Maxim: On the contrary. When two women meet, they both run their own husbands down. Albert and I are both praising our wives. This is much better behaviour. The fact that it is the same wife in both cases makes it even better.

Chloe: This is too much! I am going to get ready for dinner! Will you please decide meanwhile which one I am to have dinner with?

Exit Chloe

Maxim: You seem younger than I had imagined. Albert. May I ask how old you are?

Albert: I am five years younger than Chloe.

Maxim: What a coincidence. I am five years older.

Albert: Is that significant?

Maxim: Only that she decided to move on from you to an older, more experienced man.

Albert: There was no need to do that. If she had stayed with me, I would have become older and more experienced at no extra expense...

Just a moment! Did you see something huge and white out there?

Maxim: Yes. It was the first-class dining room wine waiter shimmering in to dinner.

Albert: Perhaps you are right...

Unknownst to them, it is actually an iceberg and Maxim, Albert and Chloe have about forty minutes left in which to sort out their tangled threesome. Will they manage it? Watch this space!

Late spring: winter beach defences still in place in Deauville, France

Photograph: Brian Harris

A 9x12 print of this photograph can be ordered on 071-293 2534

Gays and the church

JOHN LITTLE says he cannot understand why I bothered protesting against the Archbishop of Canterbury's support for anti-gay discrimination ("The new moral army", 16 April).

Far from being irrelevant, as Lytle suggests, the church helps sustain inequality. Bishops sit in the House of Lords. Not one of them voted for an equal age of consent in 1994. With Dr Carey's blessing, church supporters recently succeeded in amending the Human Rights Bill to allow religious institutions to continue to discriminate against lesbians and gay men.

When the church abuses its power to deny human rights to others, the victims of Christian oppression are entitled to confront Dr Carey and demand justice.

PETER TATCHELL
Outrage!
London W1

SORRY that we disrupted your tranquil Easter services, Dr Carey. But you've been disrupting my life daily for quite some time now. You and your followers have been arguing against the civil rights of gays and lesbians, and it's about time we did something about it.

Lots of otherwise gay-sympathetic Christians seem upset that we would disturb the sanctity of such a religious holiday. I'm much more upset that the Church would disturb the sanctity of my Bible by using Christian rhetoric to further its message of discrimination and intolerance.

MELANIE CLOUD
London W1

called Christian groups. For instance the "Maranatha Community", a shadowy group of right-wing Christians, has recently sent packs of information to all MPs in anticipation of the vote to equalise the age of consent. True, the pack is a pretty thin gruel of bogus "facts", scare-mongering and poor biblical scholarship, which will not, I imagine, impress many of the recipients; but it has been sent, and sent by Christians.

What angers many of us inside the church, priests, bishops and lay people included, is that the anti-gay stance adopted by much of the hierarchy is so ill-informed and hypocritical. Ill-informed, because it asserts that the biblical evidence condemning homosexual behaviour is clear-cut, which manifestly it is not. And hypocritical, because even if the biblical condemnation were clear that is not the reason for the church's homophobia. While whole swathes of biblical teaching on for instance the status of women, slavery, the conduct of war, and the immorality of banking, have rightly been rejected as no longer relevant, and in some cases repellent, the few verses of the Bible referring to homosexual behaviour are given almost unique authority simply because they happen to coincide with the prejudices of those who quote them.

The Rev NEIL DAWSON
St Paul's, Knightsbridge
London SW1

ON READING the letters published on 15 April concerning the church and homosexuality I was struck that although they gave opposite opinions on Mr Tatchell's behaviour they both originated in the premise that the church should accept homosexuality.

Geoff Hennessy reminded us of the commandment to "love thy neighbour" but this does not mean love thy neighbour's behaviour. Jesus loved "sinners" but hated "sin". We are all

far from perfect and the church should love us all as people: homosexual, heterosexual, puritan and libertine alike, but should not falter from being compassionately firm and clear-headed in pointing out where we go wrong and how we should change.

JOHN WOMERSLEY
West Down, Devon

GEORGE MICHAEL was arrested for lewd behaviour, not for being a homosexual. A straight man should likewise have been stopped.

Peter Tatchell was charged with disrupting a church service, not for being gay. He would have been arrested if he had been advertising breakfast cereal from the pulpit.

Perhaps what John Lytle calls the "new homophobia" is really the recognition that being part of a minority does not give you the right to behave in ways that would be unacceptable for anyone else.

The Rev Dr EDWARD CONDRY
Rugby, Warwickshire

Exchange of bile

DAVID AARONOVITCH ("Free the teachers, they're better than their unions", 17 April) is entitled to his opinion about Nigel de Gruchy's work as general secretary of the NASUWT. What sticks in the craw, however, is the puerile tone of the personal abuse.

Aaronovitch's journey from Communist apparatchik in the National Union of Students to spokesman for every fashionable anti-union prejudice has been characterised by a slippery opportunism which stands in stark contrast to the honesty and consistency of Nigel de Gruchy's position.

Unlike Aaronovitch, Nigel de Gruchy has a responsibility to represent accurately the views of 170,000 teachers – not for him the luxury of ingratiating himself with every passing fad of fashionable

opinion. Perhaps it is that principled position – which provokes Aaronovitch's bile? EAMONN O'KANE
Deputy General Secretary
NASUWT
Birmingham

These evil men

I READ with some alarm the heading accompanying your front-page photograph of Pol Pot's body: "The most evil man in the world is dead" (17 April). It is unnecessary to make such definitive statements on issues which are not so conclusively agreed. Is this description the opinion of the editor, or is it supposed to gauge the public reaction to Pol Pot's death? As you reported, even the King of Cambodia only named him "one of the most horrible monsters ever created". By implication, now that he is dead, we must look for someone to assume this most distinguished title of "most evil man in the world". If so, are we to be asked for our suggestions, or does the making of such nominations fall solely within the domain of newspaper editors?

JEREMY KING
Birmingham

Turn out that light

YOUR correspondent's enthusiasm (Design, 16 April) for the decorative lighting of buildings and other structures is rather alarming. More and more light straying upwards is making it ever harder to see the stars at night. We (and our children) are being increasingly denied the opportunity to gain a first-hand appreciation of our place in the universe, a far deeper experience than that offered by an electricity substation pretending to be a Christmas tree.

B J CRAVEN
Menstrie, Central Scotland

Turning Japanese?

RICHARD LLOYD PARRY's overview of the Kurile Islands dispute (18 April) omits one arcane but interesting matter.

The talks Yeltsin attended are the "return" leg of Russo-Japanese talks in Novosibirsk last year – from which Japan's claim to the Kurile Islands was noticeably absent. The talks went very well, from Russia's somewhat weak position. The detail of the investment Japan promised reveals a programme of intensive language tuition to enable Russians to learn Japanese.

Hidden away in the appendices is information about where this program is to begin: in ... er ... the Kurile Islands. Seems that Sir Humphrey Appleby is doing a fine job. NEIL MCGOWAN
Perville, Middlesex

After Calvin

PATRICK COSGRAVE got his Scottish churches wrong in Sir Ian MacGregor's obituary (15 April). Strict Calvinists would be Free ("Wee Frees") or Free Presbyterians, never United Free, a church that was consciously post-Calvinist from the start. ALISTAIR MASON
Harrogate, North Yorkshire

Political joke

IF BEN ELTON, in his rejection of "Cool Britannia", believes that politicians should not be guided by populist views and the vagaries of showbusiness, why does he expect them to listen to the views of a stand-up comic? CLIVE WHICHELOW
London SW19

Name these islands

CORRESPONDENTS have been seeking a new name for "these islands". A friend has just received a letter from Peking addressed to her in the United Kingdom. Now that Scotland and Wales are to some degree released from English hegemony and Ulster is hursting its corsets, the notion is a happy one.

GRAHAM BINNIS
Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire

The iceberg cometh between husbands and wife



MILES KINGSTON

TODAY I bring you another extract from *Brief Tables*, the forgotten Noel Coward play set aboard the *Titanic*. The story so far is that Maxim and Chloe, on their honeymoon, have run into Albert, Chloe's first husband, who has reappeared after being presumed dead at the North Pole. Maxim and Chloe are reclining on the first-class deck, admiring the sunset and wondering if Albert's return will affect their marriage...

Maxim: You never actually divorced Albert, did you?
Chloe: I had no idea he was alive. To divorce a dead husband seems a little extreme. People might think I was being critical of him behind his back.

Maxim: In retrospect, it would have been wiser. He would have come back from the dead a free man, unmarried. As it is, he has turned you into a bigamist.

Chloe: No, he hasn't. It is you who did that, on the day you married me.

Maxim: So you accuse me of bigamy?
Chloe: Not at all. I am the bigamist. YOU are merely married to a bigamist.

Maxim: Poor child. Tell me, what is it like having two husbands?

Chloe: Not unpleasant. It is rather like having two quite different children.

Maxim: Are you trying to tell me you also have offspring I don't know about?

Chloe: Oh, don't let's bicker like this! We are here to enjoy a magical honeymoon on the maiden voyage of the *Titanic*. Just because I am married to someone else on board as well, you shouldn't get upset...

Why don't we go for a walk?

Maxim: In fact, I did go for a long stroll this morning, while you were applying your make-up. The ship is immense. I never expected to get blisters on an ocean cruise. It is so far from how to stern that the weather is appreciably different at the other end of the ship.

Chloe: In what way?

Maxim: It's further south, and thus much warmer.

Chloe: That sounds lovely.

Maxim: And what makes it seem even longer is that you walk from class to class, down from first through second to steerage, just as if one were going on a motoring trip through Eastern Europe. Why, there are parts of the steerage where nobody speaks English at all. Next time I go rambling on this ship, I shall take an interpreter with me.

Enter Albert, Chloe's first husband.

Albert: Hello, you two! How's the honeymoon going?

Chloe: Albert! That is a question you must never ask a woman!

Albert: Not even if you are married to her? Come on, you can tell me!

Maxim: You seem in a very jolly mood, Albert. I may call you Albert, may I not?

Albert: Of course. Fact is, I am always ill at ease away from the polar regions. This evening I can smell ice in the air. That

makes me happier.

Maxim: The only ice I ever have beneath my nose is the ice in a gin and tonic. It has the same effect on me. And it is far cheaper than mounting a polar expedition.

Chloe: Well, it is nice to see you two getting on so well.

Maxim: We have a lot in common.

Albert: The same wife.

Maxim: The same taste in women.

Chloe: Oh, for heaven's sake, stop going on about both being married to me! It is so dreary.

Maxim: On the contrary. When two women meet, they both run their own husbands down. Albert and I are both praising our wives. This is much better behaviour. The fact that it is the same wife in both cases makes it even better.

Chloe: This is too much! I am going to get ready for dinner! Will you please decide meanwhile which one I am to have dinner with?

Exit Chloe

Maxim: You seem younger than I had imagined. Albert. May I ask how old you are?

Albert: I am five years younger than Chloe.

Maxim: What a coincidence. I am five years older.

Albert: Is that significant?

Maxim: Only that she decided to move on from you to an older, more experienced man.

Albert: There was no need to do that. If she had stayed with me, I would have become older and more experienced at no extra expense...

Just a moment! Did you see something huge and white out there?

Maxim: Yes. It was the first-class dining room wine waiter shimmering in to dinner.

Albert: Perhaps you are right...

Unknownst to them, it is actually an iceberg and Maxim, Albert and Chloe have about forty minutes left in which to sort out their tangled threesome. Will they manage it? Watch this space!

Tony will carry on reaching for the Sky, at least till 2002



**ANNE
McELVOY**
NEW LABOUR'S TRYST
WITH MURDOCH

POLITICAL parties create their own mythology, none more assiduously than New Labour. Channel Four's Blair's Year reminded us of how deftly the modernisers have preserved and adorned the memories of the 1997 victory. There is always an official and an unofficial story to elections. When a party machine is as good at presentation as this one, we do not often see the join.

It was amusing to see a number of people in the Blair team fondly recall in the programme that Tony Blair "happened to" arrive at the Festival Hall as dawn broke. In fact as they all knew, it had been ordained by Alastair Campbell that Mr Blair would appear there, as befits a Messiah, at the breaking of the day and that his first public words as Prime Minister in waiting would be "it is a new dawn, is it not?" Mr Blair in the event arrived early (or was dawn late?) so the cavalcade had to wait in a side street until the moment was right.

This sort of manipulation shouldn't worry us too much - politics is in great part theatre and we don't worry that the claps of thunder on the blasted heath are generated by someone behind the set banging a tin sheet. But there are other invisible links and hidden hands which do make people feel uncomfortable. By far the most powerful and controversial of these belong to Rupert Murdoch. In the mind of Mr Blair - largely through the influence of Mr Campbell - the new dawn would not have been possible without the support of News International and the Sun.

Number Ten thus sees the Murdoch papers as the key to winning a second term. It is so focused on this goal that it has sometimes failed to see the perils of too intimate and uncritical a relationship with the proprietor. The issue of Murdoch may well turn out to be for Mr Blair and Labour what Europe was for John Major and the Conservatives: one which arouses such visceral and implacable hostility that otherwise fiddable people in the party are not prepared to take a vow of silence for the good of the leadership.

In the wake of the HarperCollins affairs and the revelation that Mr Blair had intervened with the Italian prime minister on behalf of BSkyB's interests, things are approaching a kind of critical mass. The newspaper report yesterday that Tim Allan, Mr Blair's deputy press secretary is going to join BSkyB as director of communications will strike many Labour supporters as bitter icing on the birthday cake.

Already there is muttering that Mr Allan's appointment is intended to strengthen the links between the Murdoch clan and Mr Blair's office. This is not an unreasonable conclusion, given BSkyB's interests in digital broadcasting and ambitions to gain more broadcast rights to major sporting events. Does it matter? At this point I feel obliged to declare my own entry in the registry of interests: I start-

ed my career on a Murdoch paper, worked for the *Times* for several years and found him a reasonable employer.

The existence of this newspaper would not be possible had he not broken the hold of the unions at Wapping. I sense, in the arguments of those who wish to make of him the single root cause of Britain's ills, a handy replacement for a graspable political foe. He has moved into the diabolical space that Margaret Thatcher occupied and which the Tory Party so signally fails to fill at present.

None the less you don't have to hate Murdoch to think Mr Blair's intervention with Signor Prodi beyond the call of duty. As far as I gather from experienced civil servants, Prime Ministers are generally discouraged from making such direct interventions on behalf of a specific company with a foreign government on the grounds that no politician really knows what lies behind a businessman's strategy. I was also uneasy at Mr Blair's refusal in the Commons to say when he last met Mr Murdoch or how often they had met since he took office. Meetings between Prime Ministers and major entrepreneurs should be a matter of public record. It is not enough to say such matters are private. A Government which promised us transparency owes us that.

Thirdly, the Government does not seem to be getting a particularly good deal out of Mr Murdoch. Having committed itself to the closing of tax-loopholes for the rich, it seems strangely relaxed about leaving him a great deal of leeway in organising his affairs.

Finally both Old and New Labour deeply dislikes and distrusts Mr Murdoch. Whereas Mr Blair has often succeeded in getting his party to accept things they previously did not, he is on more fragile ground here because Murdoch is the shared focus of dislike between two groups in Labour who are more usually to be found at each other's throats. Enophile modernisers believe that Mr Murdoch's papers, in particular the *Sun*, whose line he dictates directly, is to blame for per-

He deeply distrusts the kind of Europe he believes the architects of the single currency are pursuing

suading Mr Blair into his ambiguous stance on EMU. The Hard Left has not forgiven him Wapping nor for being a buccannering capitalist and a walking example of the globalisation of markets which they fear and dread.

In last night's television programme, Peter Mandelson spoke openly for the first time of Mr Blair's relations with Mr Murdoch and ventured the view that it was Labour's role to "convert" the proprietor to a single European currency. The unspoken codicil was that the *Sun* would then learn to love the Euro and that would quell the public's reservations.

It won't be that simple. For a start Mr Murdoch is not merely sceptical about EMU's chance of success. He deeply distrusts the kind of Europe he believes the architects of the single currency are pursuing - a political entity, highly regulated by bureaucrats, suspicious of free trade and with protectionist instincts which would bind the hands of people such as him. Assuming that Mr Murdoch and News International continue to thrive, the Government has three choices for the foreseeable future. It can pursue British entry to EMU and lose the *Sun*. It can keep in with Mr Murdoch and not pursue EMU. Or it can decide that pleasing Mr Murdoch is important until 2002 and wait for the next new dawn to consider entry to EMU. That is what I think will happen.

A rare moment to celebrate as Ulster's old absolutes crumble



**DAVID
McKITTRICK**
A GOOD
WEEKEND

THERE is a long way to go in this peace process, with difficulties and probably violence ahead. But the events of this weekend justify those who support it luxuriating in a moment of celebration.

It is impossible to find in either mainstream Unionism or mainstream Republicanism anyone who loves the Good Friday agreement, for it contains much to dismay members of each tradition. Yet over the weekend almost three-quarters of the Ulster Unionist Council voted in favour of it while at the Sinn Féin conference Republican leaders carefully laid the groundwork for its qualified acceptance in time for the referendum of May 22nd.

These are both momentous developments, for the UUC and the *And-Feis* are no ordinary gatherings. They are repositories of the theologies of Unionism and Republicanism, keepers of the faith of their fathers. And since those fathers have cordially detested each other for a couple of centuries, it is truly amazing to watch their offspring moving towards acceptance of the same document.

They are doing so in very different styles. Gerry Adams and his associates are as cautious as ever, gently massaging their supporters towards a Yes vote in the referendum, but giving them time to come to terms with a deal so different from the Republican goal of Irish unity.

Many in the Unionist grassroots have been thinking in terms of a deal such as this for several years now, ever since the first IRA ceasefire in 1994. The Protestant business community has been ready for it, as have the loyalist paramilitary groups and most church leaders.

But the Protestant political classes were the last to catch on, clinging as they did first to their Parliamentary arrangement with John Major and later to the expectation - which for some of them, sadly, became an actual hope - that the IRA would break its ceasefire and have Sinn Féin expelled from the process. It was the UUC which chose



Ulster Unionist leader David Trimble has probably surprised many members of the party in his dealings over the Irish peace agreement

David Trimble as party leader in 1995. It is a fair bet that many and probably most of those who voted for him thought they were choosing not a deal-maker but a champion of the hard-line.

Many of these were consequently shell-shocked when he emerged from the Stormont negotiations with a document which proposed letting out nearly all the prisoners, overhauling the RUC and possibly having Sinn Féin members as part of a new administration. Perilously little work had been done to prepare them for such radical moves.

In opting for the agreement they went against the advice of the Orange Order and resisted the clamour of the Rev Ian Paisley.

They declined the counsel of six of their party's ten MPs, ranging from the most experienced to the most ambitious. These were the people who turned down powersharing with John Hume: now they have not ruled out powersharing with Gerry Adams. A body famous for just saying No just said Yes.

This is not of course the end of the matter: in Northern Ireland it never is. With more than a month to go to the referendum there is the possibility that

anti-agreement elements within the party. Orangeism and Paisleyism can together mount an effective campaign for a No vote.

A weekend opinion poll indicated that there is still much to play for, showing that 34 per cent of Protestants presently intend to vote Yes while 22 per cent mean to vote No. That leaves a huge number of Undecideds - 42 per cent - who might go either way. Since Catholics are markedly in favour of the agreement, it would only take a minority of Protestant Yes votes for the referendum to succeed.

To give it real moral authority, however, it needs a majority of Protestants to vote in its favour. It is realistic for the pro-agreement elements to hope that David Trimble's signal success on Saturday will create a bandwagon effect which will bring on board most of the Undecideds.

There is plenty of uncertainty and anxiety around for the Paisley camp to prey on, but so far the pro-agreement people seem to be winning. Their most potent arguments are that no more favourable deal is on offer now or in the future, that rejection would condemn Unionism to isolation, and that

no realistic alternative is being put forward. Underpinning all of this is the sense that acceptance could lead to peace and stability while rejection would certainly mean stalemate and, almost certainly, more war.

This last argument is also the strongest card in the hand of Gerry Adams as he coaxes the doubters among his grassroots to accept the accord. The logic of almost a decade of peace process is for Sinn Féin to recommend a Yes vote in the referendum and go on to take seats in both the new assembly and the new administration of Northern Ireland.

That single sentence contains three concepts which even a couple of years ago would have been regarded as simply inconceivable for Republicans. Like the UUC's ground-breaking decision, they demonstrate how old rules and habits are being shattered and how the basic grammar of Northern Ireland politics is changing.

That Republican Yes recommendation will be a Yes

But, since there is just too much in the agreement for Republicans to swallow in one go. Despite the reservations, however, it will open the way to actively working the accord.

That is how it is: all heading at the moment, though there are scores of hurdles ahead which will require the most meticulous micro-management.

Yet it is a marvel to see David Trimble and Gerry Adams working in the same direction, and to think that the hostile parallel lines of Unionism and Republicanism might this weekend have begun to converge.

The moment of celebration for all this may be brief, before the next battery of difficulties and complications arrives. But it is a genuine moment for those who support the agreement to take heart, as they witness the old absolutes of Unionism and Republicanism settling for the imperfect and preparing to make sacrifices in the cause of peace.

Why my Burgundy is a socially responsible drink



**DAVID
WALKER**
OUR MUTUAL
FRIENDS

SOMEWHERE in Burgundy, in a cool cellar, in a well-cooped barrel sits a hectolitre or so of wine, lovingly pressed from the Côte d'Or's finest cabernet sauvignon and nine lives of it are mine. At least they will be mine next spring when, after bottling and shipment, a plum coloured van from the Wine Society pulls up outside to disgorge its treasure.

It's not grand cru and it will be ready to drink in a modest three to five years: I offer you a glass of that wine bought on principle to illustrate the limits of capitalism - and why members of the Royal Automobile Club are wrong to think of selling out. (There is a proposal afoot for members of the private club of the RAC to float the motor rescue service and the British School of Motoring, making them-

selves £20,000-£30,000 richer as a result.)

The Wine Society is owned by its members. I wouldn't sell my share for a mess of pottage, even if it had several noughts attached. That's because the share brings a precious commodity, trust. My Burgundy is bought, sight unseen, in the confidence it will be at least reasonable and at best very good and that it will arrive as promised.

My trust is greater than that I would ever place in Odbins or Adnams. The Wine Society has an ethos, a way of working, which shows up in the way the brochures are written and the way staff behave. Its distinctiveness rests on the fact it is not seeking to make money out of me.

Yet the principle of mutualism on which the Society, and the RAC, operate has lately been in retreat - hands up all those who did not raise their hands to stop Norwich Union or Abbey National or London Life (Australian Mutual Provident) being demutualised. There are, however, welcome signs that the tide of demutualisation may now be ebbing.

Indeed the best reason for the board of the Royal Automobile Club to go ahead and float "its" assets is that it would generate a deep swell of anger among all those RAC "members" (technically merely associate members) who will feel hard done by. As a result, perhaps, people out there in civil society might wake up to how precious mutual, non-profit forms of organisation are and how the cavalier short-termism of recent years has put them in jeopardy. In a just world RAC

members would resign in droves and join the Automobile Association - which is a genuine member-owned body. The mutual principle suffers from two things. One is the perennial laziness of club members to turn out and vote. Memo to myself: the Wine Society's AGM takes place in a few weeks. I admit the open democracy on which, in theory, the organisation is based depends on a handful of activists and the besetting problem of mutual organisations like it is oligarchy. But that is true in spades of profit-making plc's, too. Look at turnouts for company meetings.

Mutualism's other difficulty is that

panies are run by their executive officers with an eye on the main chance and their own interests; shareholders figure only irregularly and then usually only in the form of Blitzkrieg by City institutions with large blocks of shares.

The point about mutual organisation, whether in the form of building societies or life assurance companies or the Cooperative Bank, is that it provides an alternative model of running a collective endeavour. No one is pretending that mutuals are better on the textbook indices of rate of return: the point is that they are different, their staff have different values. Killing mu-

ceived at large to be relatively equitable. Ours is so regarded, thanks of course to the fact that the state does do some redistribution of income and wealth but also to the way voluntary and mutual organisations cushion economic and social relations.

These organisations include not only the churches, scout troops and creches but also the golf and tennis clubs sitting on land which, if developed for housing would fetch members a pretty penny. It is because, in a large sphere of our lives, we do not go for profit that market economies such as ours can function in relative stability - a lesson the Thatcherites never learnt.

You cannot derive from that a ready reckoner for what the size of the voluntary/not-for-profit sector should be relative to either the state or the private market but it should make us all vigilant when demutualisation is proposed and a lot more active when it comes to annual general meetings and the everyday democracy of our clubs.

In the Government's welfare green paper published last month, mutuals get an honourable mention - they are a pet theme of Frank Field - but there is nothing about how they should be fostered or supported. Labour's focus is organisations which do things for the poor, and so reduce the need for state spending and intervention. But the Government needs to realise that mutuals and voluntary bodies all exist within the same not-for-profit culture - credit unions, trade unions, the Women Royal Voluntary Service and the Automobile Association... and the Wine Society. I'll drink to that.

Mutualism deepens the bed of trust on which the market economy depends for its effective functioning

In recent years it has all but drowned under a tidal wave of neo-Darwinist propaganda saying market processes are invincible and anyone who stands in their way will be crushed under history's wheels if not Mrs Thatcher's chariot. Yet in the midst of markets we have this odd thing, the limited liability company, which operates on the most outrageously collectivist and "political" principles - including votes, boards, chairs and committees. For all the recent hot air about corporate governance, the brute fact is most com-

mutuals robs us all - shareholders included - of useful comparative information. Mutual organisations can and do enjoy warmer and closer relationships with members/consumers...they certainly do at Wine Society tastings, but that could have something to do with general underuse of the spoils.

Mutualism also deepens the bed of trust on which the market economy depends for its effective functioning. Capitalism is unfair but its injustices are legitimised in a society which is per-



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Lord Howell

Denis Howell was the only professional football referee to become a Member of Parliament and the only Minister of the Crown to have refereed at Wembley. Sport and politics, policy and sport – it is hard to tell which for him came first so intertwined did he make them but his fame goes further than that. There was the Labour Party, not New Labour or Old Labour but, as he insisted, Real Labour, decent trades unionism, Europeanism and Christianity – all issues that were part and parcel of his very being and which he propagated with unflinching strength and gusto.

Denis Howell wrote his autobiography in 1990 and called it *Made in Birmingham*. It was a title of genius. He radiated all the drive, the inventiveness after betterment which that great city embodies. "Our lives," he wrote, "were dominated by factories". A thousand trades nestled around the great church of St Paul's; there was a great theatre too, the Birmingham Rep, and a great symphony orchestra – all had a profound effect on the young Denis.

The backyards of Birmingham he said were the worlds of his childhood. The Howells were poor. Denis's mother took in washing, Denis's father a factory fitter, was unemployed for six years following his support for the General Strike. Denis learnt to bang about a ball in the backyards as a life-long devotee of Aston Villa and learnt trades union solidarity at his father's knee.

He was not quite 16 when war was declared in 1939. There was no more school. He went straight to work and fire-fighting. Active trade unionism, local Labour politics leading on to membership of the City Council. Nineteen fifty-five he described as the most significant in his life. "I entered Parliament and married Brenda."

During those early Opposition years Howell was notable not only for his continued activity as a football referee, but as an ardent right-wing sup-

porter of Hugh Gaitskill. On Gaitskill's death he became George Brown's campaign manager for the party leadership, one of his few political failures.

With Labour's return to power, Harold Wilson with customary magnanimity appointed Howell to the Ministry of Education to look after schools and sports. Thus he became the country's first Minister for Sport. Howell related how he seized the moment. In 1966 England was host to the World Cup. Wilson asked what that meant. Howell replied that 16 of the finest national teams in the world would be coming to Britain and much needed to be done. He went on to point out that it was not much use having a Minister for Sport with a World Cup on his hands if he had no money to organise it. Wilson then said: "How much do you want?" And so it went and England won.

Achievements came thick and fast: the creation of the Sports Council, British success at the Tokyo Olympics, the first sporting honours and a knighthood for Stanley Matthews. Also direct Exchequer assistance for sport and physical recreation throughout England and Wales.

Denis Howell's insistence on the relationship between sport and politics was underlined in the famous D'Oliveira affair, the case of the young coloured cricketer from the Cape who wanted to play in England as racial discrimination in South Africa made it impossible for him to play there. D'Oliveira played spectacularly for Worcestershire and the MCC were due to tour South Africa in 1968/69. The MCC selectors failed to select D'Oliveira. As Howell said: "All hell was let loose". The MCC was first to relent: the South African government did not and continued to refuse all entry facilities. It was the beginning of the long boycott of South Africa from international sport.

The same issue of racism in sport erupted some 15 years lat-

er in the Zola Budd scandal, the case of the young South African runner to whom the Conservative government granted British citizenship in 10 days flat – speed without precedence – in order that she should run for England at the Los Angeles Olympics. Howell led the anti-Budd, anti-Tory anti-racist outcry.

Among his most famous achievements was his near miraculous success as so-called Minister for Drought in 1976 when whole areas of the country had only a few days' water supply left. He toured the country turning on ceremonial standpipes; arriving in Yorkshire the heavens opened and a deluge followed.

His fame became known far and wide. The Italian press hailed him as Signor Acqua. In Tashkent and Samarkand his arrival brought storms and longed-for rain. It worked the other way too. The Queen Mother asked Howell for a fine day for the Champion Hurdle at Cheltenham. The rain stopped promptly.

In many other areas of the country's life Howell was in the forefront of activity. The bright young Brummie clerk became one of the longest-serving trades union presidents (1971-83). He kept the clerical workers – soon to become the Association of Professional Clerical and Computer Staff – firmly on a responsible path, mocking away all the left-wing attempts to get rid of him. He became president of the Labour Movement in Europe, a determined pro-European throughout the time that the official Labour Party was deeply anti. He delighted in being made a peer and debated fiercely to secure terrestrial television access without charge to all Britain's leading sporting events.

He was a deeply convivial character with an enormous capacity for enjoyment and sharing that enjoyment. Good wine, good cigars and the companionship of cherished friends were never far away. It was particularly awful for such a happy nature to bear the tragedy of the death of

his 21-year-old son David. He had however deep religious resources and always at his side Brenda, the wife he adored.

Anne Symonds

In the summer of 1970 Labour was somewhat unexpectedly defeated at the polls, writes **Tam Dalyell**. A minor consequence was that all the official engagements, speech-making, hosting of receptions and hotel accommodation assigned for the Minister for the Commonwealth Games, which were about to be held in Edinburgh, were automatically transferred to Neil Furlan MP. Mr Heath's newly appointed Minister responsible for Sport.

Denis Howell, the Labour Sports Minister, was suddenly bereft of hotel place, too late to book, and as a result spent three weeks at my house near Edinburgh. He had spent the four previous years immersed in the painstaking organisation of what turned out to be the Happy Commonwealth Games. Ever thoughtful of other people – this was one of his characteristics whomsoever the other people were, important or unimportant – he took me round with him wherever he went.

It was nothing short of amazing to behold the rapport he had established with the members of the Commonwealth sports authorities and all sporting organisations – even the most obscure – throughout Britain.

He had a formidable capacity for remembering names and previous encounters. Howell was almost an entire Commonwealth Relations Office in himself. He had an astonishing capacity for genuine friendship. This was unsurprising, because his Brummie bluntness was apparent.

Another attribute which he used to winning effect was his self-deprecating humour. He was a fund of unusual stories. One he enjoyed telling was how as a young referee, being no respecter of persons, he had cautioned the late Jimmy Hagan, inside left for Sheffield

United and England. Hagan has sworn quietly. Howell hauled him across: "Did I hear you call me a bloody blind swine?" Reported Hagan: "I did not know you were bloody deaf as well!"

Howell's success as a great figure in the sporting world was in one sense unlikely. He was not a sportsman himself. In truth, as a regular House of Commons squash player 8.30am to 9.30am in the ICI courts in the 1960s and 1970s I used to play with him, Ray Carter, John Cunningham, Eric Deacons, Barry Jones, Dick Taverne and other MPs. Only one of us had no ball sense, whatsoever – Denis Howell!

I would not like Howell to be remembered only as the Minister for Sport or the Minister for Drought. In terms of the Labour Party he was for 30 years a major politician, concerned with gut issues of politics, housing, employment and, above all, entry into the Common Market. He was central to the rallying of the Labour Party pro-marketisers and more than any other individual gave us, the 69 Labour MP rebels, the courage to vote against a three-line whip, galvanising us into going into the lobby with Ted Heath on the crucial vote on 28 October 1971 to enter the Community. In terms of the effect he had on British entry Denis Howell ought to be up there with the panoply of great Europeans.

Denis Herbert Howell, politician; born Birmingham 4 September 1923; PC 1976; created 1992 Lord Howell; MP (Labour) for All Saints Division, Birmingham 1955-59, Birmingham Small Heath 1961-62; Joint Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Education and Science (with responsibility for sport) 1964-69; Minister of State, Ministry of Housing and Local Government (with responsibility for sport) 1969-70; Opposition Spokesman for Local Government and Sport 1970-74; Minister of State, DoE (responsible for environment, water resources and sport) 1974-79; married 1955 Brenda Wilson (two sons, one daughter, and one son deceased); died Solihull, West Midlands 19 April 1993.



Seizing the moment: Howell opens the World Cup Information Centre in London, 1966

The Rev John Coventry SJ



Coventry: sensitive

In 1967 John Coventry was appointed the first Secretary of Ecumenical Commission established by the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales following the Second Vatican Council. He had everything to learn – in some ways an ad-

vantage. He was at the height of his powers, and brought to the task organising skills and experience, courage to break new ground, clear and open theological vision, and a willingness to trust his own and others' experience.

He also had the gift of sensitivity to the thoughts and feelings of others. He began work on many ecumenical issues, theological and practical – moving too fast for many Catholics at the time – and organised two national conferences, at Heythrop in 1967 and Coloma in 1970. He was consultant observer in the British Council of Churches, and observer at the 1968 Lambeth Conference. During these years he remained Prefect of Studies at Heythrop, and in 1970 the Bishops decided to appoint a diocesan priest

as a full-time successor to him as Commission Secretary.

He continued ecumenical work, and in 1978 became a Catholic observer on the Churches' Council for Covenanting, where he played an active and constructive role. But above all his ecumenical commitment, his theological expertise and his pastoral concern came together in an outstanding way in his work for inter-church families, where one partner is Roman Catholic and the other a member of another Christian communion.

As Secretary of the Ecumenical Commission he became aware of significant changes being made to the "promise" required about the upbringing of children of such families (others were slower to understand, but he was vindicated in the new rules from Rome published in 1970).

He gave his mind to the situation of interchurch families and their pastoral needs – at the crisis-points of getting married, the baptism and first communion of their children, but also their ongoing need to share communion as couples and families. He was a founder and co-chair of the Association of Interchurch Families in 1968.

He missed only one annual conference in 30 years, developed a theological understanding of mixed marriages between baptised Christians, and gave pastoral care to hundreds of couples. A few months before he died he referred to interchurch families as "my life's devotion".

John Seton Coventry was born in 1915 to Catholic parents

in Kent, and educated at the Jesuit school at Stonyhurst, Lancashire. He became a novice in the Society of Jesus in 1932. After three years of philosophy at Heythrop College, Oxfordshire, he was sent to Campion Hall, Oxford, to read classical Greats, obtaining a first class honours degree in 1942.

After school-teaching at Beaumont for three years, he returned to Heythrop for theological studies (1945-49). A French Jesuit on the staff, Père Alexandre Durand, was a lasting influence: he presented faith not as intellectual assent to theological propositions but as personal commitment and way of life.

Coventry was ordained in 1947, and soon finished writing three books: *Morals and Independence* (1946), one on the

Mass, and one dedicated to Père Durand, *Faith, Seeking Understanding* (1951). Its radical rethinking of the relationship between nature and grace was suspect to some, and although published with an imprimatur, the Jesuit authorities withdrew it.

Instead of being able to develop as an academic theologian, this brilliant young scholar returned to teach at Beaumont, becoming Rector in 1956. He nourished his passion for theology by wide reading, and teaching developed his talent for clear exposition. He always made theology immediately relevant to the concerns of his listeners – and it was always a theology based on Christian experience. His writing was concise and clear; he wrote many articles and short books.

In 1958 he became Jesuit Provincial. He enjoyed visiting Guyana and Southern Africa, mission areas of the English province. At the end of his term of office he joined the staff of Heythrop College in 1965, became Prefect of Studies. He was involved in plans to open it up to lay students and therefore in its move from rural Oxfordshire to become a constituent college of London University in 1970.

In 1976 the Fellows and Association of St Edmund's House, Cambridge jointly elected him Master, and later re-elected him for a further term until 1985. He raised the profile of St Edmund's and enabled it to become a College of Cambridge University while retaining Catholic links.

In his later years, spent first

at Heythrop, delighting lay as well as clerical students with his lectures, then at Maressa House in Birmingham, and latterly at Mount Street, he suffered from deafness and an illness which limited his activities, but he continued his work with interchurch families (he was elected a President of the Association in 1997) and his writing. His last book, *Our God Reigns*, was published in 1995.

Martin Reardon and Ruth Reardon

John Seton Coventry, priest; born Kent 21 January 1915; entered Society of Jesus 1932, ordained 1947; Rector, Beaumont 1956-58; Provincial, English Province of Society of Jesus 1958-64; Lecturer in Theology, Heythrop College 1965-76; Master, St Edmund's House, Cambridge 1976-85; died London 9 April 1993.

Harold Sumption

Someone somewhere is probably writing the history of charity fund-raising in this country. If they are, the name of Harold Sumption will feature prominently. Raising money for charities is now an industry and a formal profession; and just about all this activity stems from this one remarkable man.

It doubtless helped that he was a Quaker advertising man, a rare fusion of the spiritual and the worldly. For the man who helped put Oxfam, Help The Aged and ActionAid on the map also managed to be a very successful director of advertising agencies for 30 years, taking on non-executive directorships with a Derbyshire clothing manufacturer and a hard-boiled mail-order advertiser in the Franklin Mint when his agency career was drawing to a close.

He was born in 1916, the son of a farmer, in a Devon village and started his career in a London advertising agency in the early Thirties. Like many young men of the time, he spent much of his early adult years attending public meetings – on Indian independence, the Popular Front and other Thirties causes.

One drizzly day in 1935 he followed a crowd into a large hall in Euston Road in the belief that he would be listening to Jomo Kenyatta. He had in fact got crashed the Yearly Meeting at Friends House. Eighteen months later he joined the Society of Friends. His beloved Ruth joined the same Meeting a little later and they were married at the Meeting House in Wellington, Somerset in 1938.

Inevitably he was a conscientious objector during the Second World War and in the latter part of it suffered a severe return of the TB that had laid him low some years earlier. He was confined to various sanatoria for nearly five years, the last two in Switzerland – an experience which left him with a life-long love of that country. The return to work in post-war Britain was a gradual and careful one; by now he also had two young children.

He needed to reconcile his zest for commercial advertising with his faith, applying his creative and entrepreneurial skills to the new art of communicating voluntary and humanitarian causes. A young charity, then known as the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief, gave him the perfect opportunity.

Run by a fellow Quaker, Leslie Kirkley, it was a world away from the traditional Lady Bountiful charities. Its remit was aid for refugees, help for victims of war, natural calamity and famine and it was pursuing this mission in a post-war Britain that had plentiful reasons to be sorry for itself. Sumption was never on the payroll of the organisation that later became Oxfam, but he served it as advertising man, as council member and as board member for 35 years, from 1950 onwards.

In that first decade he invented the "off-the-page" fund-raising advertisement – one that asks the reader for a response. Deliberately artless and always written by Sumption, the ad would shock and provoke with its simple, powerful depiction of need. In those early

days the appeal was often for clothing and blankets as much as for money, but response from the public was swift and massive. The ads were carried as banners on Aldermaston marches and in leftist plays; a later generation would probably call them iconic.

The creative technique may look crude today (though no fund-raising has ever been so cost-effective). In fact it was underpinned by a pioneering use of many of the techniques that were later applied by mail-order companies and other direct marketers. All the ads were "keyed" so that response could be attributed to individual newspapers. They were also subject to "split runs" so that one treatment could be tested against another in the same edition.

The Oxfam media list expanded into title corners, books of stamps, free poster sites, anywhere the message could be deployed at a predictive rate of response. Soon, other charities were queuing at Sumption's door for advice on how to apply these new techniques of press advertising, direct mail and trading catalogues. By 1963, Oxfam was big and bold enough to raise £1,000,000 in three months. There was a Trafalgar Square rally, a huge promotion with the *Daily Mail*, the involvement of the Beatles and the young Jeffrey Archer. The "Hunger Million" campaign was a multi-media triumph and a true Harold Sumption vision.

But he remained as much an advertising man as a fund-raiser. He became a Fellow of the Institute of Practitioners in Ad-

vertising and served on its Council. He helped set up the Montreux International Direct Marketing Symposium. And in 1979 he co-founded the International Fundraising Workshop (IFRW) in Holland, an event which attracted just 31 delegates in its first year and which now attracts huge numbers of fund-raisers from over 30 countries in addition to running satellite seminars and workshops throughout the developing world.

Perhaps IFRW is Harold Sumption's best memorial. The fund-raising techniques he forged decades ago are now being passed on and developed in Africa and Asia and Latin America. In that sense he will have helped to change the world.

Every British charity also owes much to Harold Sumption.



Sumption: new fund-raising

He created a totally new vocabulary of fund-raising, one that still applies throughout the voluntary sector.

George Smith

Harold Sumption, advertising man and charity fund-raiser; born Camstock, Devon 26 November 1916; married 1938 Ruth Burrows (died 1987; one son, one daughter); died London 18 March 1993.

BIRTHS

HILL-SMITH: Elizabeth and Andrew are delighted to announce the arrival of Emily Ann, a sister to Samuel and Oliver, on 15 April in Australia.

OLDFIELD: On Monday 9 April, to Amelia (nee de Moubrey) and Richard, a son.

DEATHS

BRABEN: (Jim) James Charles MBE, loving husband of the late Lily Braben, father of Pat, Enid and Lois, grandfathers of Andrew, Matthew, Carolyn and Joanne, great-grandfather of Max, died peacefully on 15 April

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

at St Peter's Hospital, Chertsey, aged 41. Funeral at 12.30pm on Friday, 24 April at St Peter's Church, Burwood Road, Hertham, Surrey followed by burial at Buryale Cemetery, Burwood Road, Hertham, and afterwards at The Mount, St John's Hill, Woking. Enquiries and flowers to

Lodge Bros, Weybridge, 01932 55755. Donations to The Mount, payable to St John's Church, Fund c/o Lodge Bros, 36 High Street, Weybridge, KT13 8AV.

GARDNER: Jane, wife of John and mother of Christopher, Lucy and Emily, at her home on 1 April. Funeral at 11.30am on Thursday, 22 April at 19 Dalm, No flowers, but donations to the Motor Neurone Disease Association c/o Lucy Gardner, 60 Grove Road, Mitcham, CR4 1SB.

For BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS please telephone 071-293 2012.

Birthdays

Mr Alan Beith MP, 55; Professor Derek Bower, QC, former president, Queens' College, Cambridge, 71; Mr Michael Brandon, actor, 53; Mr Ray Brooks, actor, 59; Sir Geoffrey Chappard, former civil servant, 65; The Right Rev Frederick Darwent, former Bishop of Aberdeen and Orkney, 71; Mr Richard de Lange, chairman and managing director, Philips Electronics UK, 53; Maj-Gen Sir Charles Dunphie, former chairman, Vickers, 96; Miss Nina Foch, film actress, 74; Mr Graeme Fowler,

cricketer, 41; Mr John Elliot Gardiner, conductor, 55; Mr Maurice Phillips, racing driver, 55; Mr Paul Henley, writer and broadcaster, 49; Mr Giles Henderson, Senior Partner, Slaughter and May, 59; Miss Louise Jameson, actress, 47; Mr Andrew Jassan, former editor, the Observer, 46; Sir Antony Jay, author and scriptwriter, 68; Mr Eddie Kulkundis, theatrical producer, 66; Miss Jessica Lange, actress, 49; Mr Nick Lindhurst, actor, 37; Mr Ryan O'Neal, actor, 57; Mr Rodger Panhome, solicitor, and former president

of the Law Society of England and Wales, 55; Mr Leslie Phillips, actor, 74; Mr Eric Pickles MP, 46; Sir John Quicke, agriculturist, 76; Mr Richard Rhodes, headmaster, Rossall School, Lancashire, 56; Mr Hugh Roberts, Director of the Royal Collection, 50; Mr Christopher Robinson, organist and director of music, St John's College, Cambridge, 62; Miss Jean Snow, broadcaster, 47; Mr Gerry Steinberg MP, 53; Mr Luther Vandross, soul singer, 47; Air Marshal Sir Richard Wakeford, 76; Mr Henry

Wrong, director, European Arts Foundation, 68.

Anniversaries

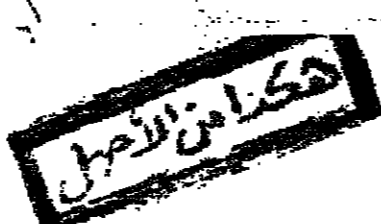
Births: Adolf Hitler, dictator, 1889. **Deaths:** Antonio (Canale) Canaletto, painter, 1768. On this day: Captain James Cook discovered New South Wales, Australia, 1770. Today is the Feast Day of St Agnes of Montepulciano, St Caedwalla, St Hildegund, St Marcellinus of Embrun, St Marcan or Marian of Auxerre and St Peter of Verona.

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

The Prince of Wales from Abbas Crag, Corrie Castle, Dorset, a loving development of accommodation for local people. The Duke of Kent, Vice-Chairman, the British Overseas Trade Board, visits Oxfam Electrical Shop Ltd, Newport, visits the Blyth Valley and attends the celebration of the 40th anniversary of Du Pont Textiles (United Kingdom) Ltd, Macclesfield, Potterspool, Gwent.

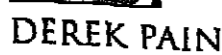
Changing of the Guard

The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am. Nijmegen Company Grenadier Guards mounts the Queen's Guard at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am. Band provided by the Grenadier Guards.



13

WEEK AHEAD



Gareth Evans and Kay Goodburn of Nikko, the Japanese investment house, point out: "The consumer simply hasn't delivered, with rising interest rates restraining consumer confidence and the evident preference for saving as opposed to spending."

Special factors were in play. Nevertheless the distinguished Next management had misread the situation. Such a mistake is unpardonable for one of the market's glamour stocks. So Next

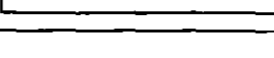
The year's profits should be comfortably ahead. The market consensus is £822m against £750.5m last time.

Year	Source Dates
1988	150
1989	120
1990	80
1991	20
1992	50
1993	120
1994	180

JJB Sports has had a torrid time, sliding from 822.5p in February to Friday's 539p, as the market senses the sports retailing boom may have evaporated, despite the

Imperial Chemical Industries will produce first-quarter profits on Thursday. The restructured group is no longer

could show a fall of 10 per cent. Legal & General should be set for a 5 per cent gain.



source: Bloomberg
www.bloomberg.com/uk

UK shipbrokers 'incompetent'

Exclusive

By Terry Macalister

THE CREDIBILITY of London's shipping community, which generates £2bn of foreign earnings each year and is a mainstay of the City's claims to be one of the world's leading financial centres, is under threat after writs claiming incompetence were issued against leading shipbrokers.

John Hancock, a huge US life insurance group, and other leading US insurers allege they lent more than US\$100m in bonds to a now failed Greek shipowner, Adriatic Tankers, on the basis of erroneous vessel valuations given by two British shipbroking firms.

A writ issued by the High Court in London and obtained by *The Independent* calls for damages of US\$31.6m to be paid by Simpson, Spence & Young, the shipbrokers. Similar threats were aimed against Braemar Shipbrokers.

It is not just US bondholders who are angry. Barclays Bank also got its fingers burnt by lending to Adriatic Tankers and that partly led to the closure of its Piraeus shipping office.

Barclays Bank is understood to be watching the SSY case carefully. The outcome could determine whether it decides to launch a legal challenge.

The shipping community fears that bad publicity generated by the case will chase lucrative work away to rival shipping centres such as Oslo and New York.

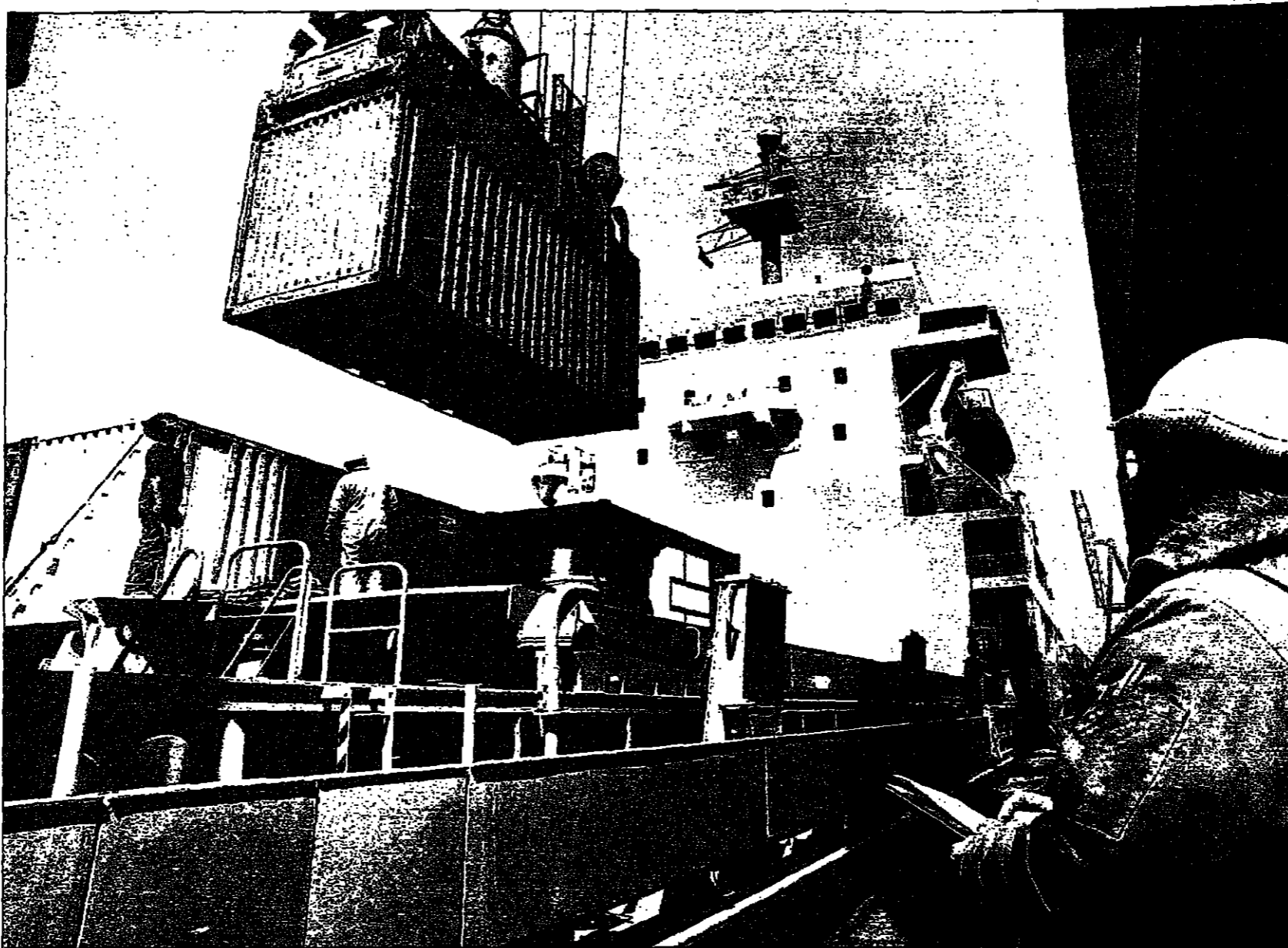
The issue is particularly sensitive at present because shipowners are engaged in a wave of junk bond offerings in the US. These fundraisings rely for their success on vessels being valued correctly.

Already there has been controversy about vessel valuations in some of the new bond issues, shipbrokers insist that almost every single vessel is built to a different specification making it hard to give an exact price.

The London shipbroking sector, with the exception of H. Clarkson and Seacope Shipping Services, is privately owned and traditionally secretive.

Shipbroking generates foreign earnings of over £300m a year but the Adriatic Tankers spat has raised questions about its professionalism and whether it is adequately insured. A further £1.7bn of foreign earnings is generated by related industries such as ship managers, maritime lawyers and financiers.

The SSY and Braemar row also raised questions over a difficult area of the shipbroking world where shipowners get valuations done for them by shipbrokers who provide them with other services.



Is the tide turning? The lawsuits could put a question mark over London's status as a leading financial centre

Photograph by Keith Dobney

No one has suggested that SSY or Braemar was involved in any kind of malpractice. But some senior figures in the industry admit that it is not unusual for shipowners to try to put pressure on brokers to give the valuations they want.

One executive, who asked not to be named, said: "I think you could call it 'commercial coercion'. If a good chartering client asks for help with valuations it can be hard to turn him down."

Eric Shawyer, president of the Chartered Institute of Shipbrokers, played down the significance of the latest furore. He said: "I do not believe this will tarnish the image of the London industry."

And Shawyer, who is also chairman and managing director of shipbroker EA Gibson, says he has never been asked to give anything other than objective valuations.

"An owner might say I think you could have valued it a bit higher or lower but there has never been any suggestion of pressure. We would not stand for that," he explained.

But while shipbrokers argue that exact valuations are difficult to give, the writ against SSY alleges its work on a range of vessels owned by Adriatic Tankers was out by a factor of 100 per cent.

It gives as an example the case of the supertanker *Asos Bay*, which was valued at \$15m by SSY. Independent valuations

done by shipbrokers for US life companies suggest the ship was worth \$7.5m.

Similarly the Myrtos Bay was given a value of \$15m by SSY but other London brokers working for the US life companies say the vessel at the time it was valued was worth only \$7.25m.

John Welham, executive director of SSY, declined to discuss these issues. But in a written statement on the threat of legal action he said: "We have been informed that a writ has been issued but nothing has been served on this company. We can confirm that any such proceedings would be vigorously defended."

Allan Marsh, Braemar's senior partner,

said: "These rumours [of legal action] have been around for two years. I have not heard anything recently."

Trevor Fairhurst, director of Fairwind, which represents the US life companies in the London and their lawyers Stephenson Harwood also declined to comment.

Adriatic Tankers raised a total of \$240m in bonds bought by John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance, New England Life Insurance and other leading companies.

When the shipowner ran into financial trouble soon after the fleet of 80 ships were seized and sold at judicial auction. They raised barely a fraction of the amount that had been lent against them as collateral.

Ministers fight over Euro bank chief

By Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

EUROPEAN UNION finance ministers, meeting in Luxembourg today for the last "Ecofin" before the special summit formally launching the single currency, are under pressure to resolve a row over who should head the European Central Bank.

The favoured candidate is Wim Duisenberg, a respected Dutch banker, but the French have been holding out for Jean-Claude Trichet, the equally hawkish governor of the Banque de France.

At the weekend Yves-Thibault de Silguy, the EU's commissioner responsible for the single currency, urged politicians to reach a decision at once in order "to give maximum credibility to the European Central Bank". The failure to resolve the five-month long row is blamed for market perceptions that the euro will be a weak currency subject to political influence.

However, a report by the Centre for Economic Policy Research argues that the euro will quickly prove to be a strong currency and will rival the US dollar as the main currency in international finance.

The authors, Richard Portes and Hélène Rey, predict that that could mean a gain of 0.5 per cent of GDP for single currency members and an equivalent loss for the US. Their most optimistic scenario for the euro, which sees it overtaking the dollar, depends, however, on the participation of the UK, because the London financial markets would play a big role in the formation of a liquid and attractive pool of euro assets.

Jürgen Stark, a senior German official, agreed the euro would play a bigger role in the international currency markets. He predicted at the weekend that Britain would join the single currency at an early stage.

But a prominent economist warns today that Britain might not achieve convergence to the other European economies for 15 years. The difficulty, says Douglas McWilliams of the Centre for Economic and Business Research, lies in structural differences, such as the fact that British homebuyers finance a much larger proportion of their purchase through borrowing.

On the other hand, he warns in evidence to the Treasury Select Committee, staying out could be costly, denying Britain the chance to participate in the restructuring that the new currency will bring.

UK investors enter age of the Internet

CHARLES SCHWAB, Britain's largest execution-only stockbroker, will today launch an internet-based trading service which will let investors trade directly in shares on the London and US stock markets.

The service is a big step forward in internet stockbroking, which so far has failed to catch on in the UK. It allows investors to use a World Wide Web browser to see the exact status of their portfolio, and enter orders straight into an electronic trading system.

Guy Knight, vice president of Charles Schwab Europe, said the service was likely to increase the amount of trades done over the Internet. The broker now has 1.4m online members in the US, where it introduced a similar service a few years ago, and over 50 per cent of the trades it handles are conducted electronically.

In the UK, it has just 1,500 electronic subscribers and all but 12 per cent of trades are conducted over the telephone.

Argos contenders fight to the end

By Peter Thal Larsen

GREAT Universal Stores' £1.9bn hostile bid for Argos, the catalogue retailer, reaches its climax this week as both companies attempt to convince shareholders of their case.

The battle kicks off in earnest today, when both GUS and Argos are scheduled to make presentations to Schroder Investment Management, the fund management group, which is Argos's largest shareholder, with a 15 per cent stake.

Later in the week Lord Wolfson, GUS's chairman, will also visit Prudential, which owns 7 per cent of Argos, to seek support for its 650p-a-share cash bid. Baillie Gifford, which also has 7 per cent, received visits from both companies last week and is set to make a decision in the next few days.

The meetings come shortly after Argos released up-to-date trading statistics for the period

up to Easter. The figures show that, for the three weeks ended 11 April, total sales grew by 13.3 per cent over the same period in the previous year while on a like-for-like basis sales were up 7.3 per cent.

That takes Argos's sales growth for the year to 11 April to 11.8 per cent, with a like-for-like increase of 5.4 per cent.

Argos had to seek special permission to release the information from the Takeover Panel. Takeover rules normally restrict a company on the receiving end of a bid from releasing any new financial information three weeks before the offer closes.

However, the Takeover Panel agreed to waive the rule on the condition that GUS be allowed to raise its offer or extend the bid period, which is due to close on Friday.

GUS insists its offer is final. The company is also thought unlikely to seek more time to convince shareholders of its case.

Argos said the most recent sales figures demonstrated that it was in robust shape. "GUS claim that Argos has run out of steam," an Argos spokesman said. "These figures show that we are steaming ahead."

GUS retorted that previous years had started equally well, only for sales figures to slip away later on in the year.

Argos, marshalled by Stuart Rose, who was brought in as chief executive at the beginning of the battle, is generally thought to have put up a robust defence.

That forced GUS to raise its offer from 560p to 650p - prompting some analysts to accuse the company of overpaying in an attempt to be certain of capturing its prey.

Argos shares closed at 634.5p last Friday a 15.5p discount to GUS's offer - suggesting that investors expect the bid to succeed. The result is expected to be announced on Friday afternoon.

Goldman partners scent \$100m

By Lea Paterson

PARTNERS in Goldman Sachs, the only leading US investment bank that is privately owned, could net up to \$100m (£60m) each if plans to float the company are approved at its annual meeting in June.

The company has already considered, and decided against, flotation on six occasions. This time round, the

issue has been brought to the fore by a sustained period of profit growth as well as changes in the bank's environment. All Goldman's close rivals are now public companies, and some have joined forces, leaving the once mighty Goldman Sachs in danger of relegation from the top tier of the financial world.

Analysts have valued the 130-year-old partnership at \$20bn (£12bn).

However, it is by no means

certain that the plans will be approved at the bank's annual meeting on 12 June. A number of the bank's 200 partners are said to be strongly opposed, including two of its six-strong executive committee. Goldman's senior governing body.

Opponents of the plans fear that flotation could destroy Goldman's partnership culture. They say the move would engender resentment among non-partners, who would be unlikely

to share in the flotation spoils. Goldman's 200 managing directors, who are just one rung below partnership, would be particularly incensed at exclusion from the flotation windfalls. Younger partners, whose windfall gains would be lower than those of more senior partners, have also traditionally opposed flotation.

There are also concerns that flotation could leave the bank vulnerable to take-over.

Bidders line up for RAC's motor arm

By Peter Thal Larsen

BIDDERS are queuing up to buy the motoring services division of the Royal Automobile Club if the organisation decides to proceed with plans to break itself up.

A spokesman for the RAC yesterday confirmed that the board had received at least half a dozen "serious" offers, with

several parties tabling bids of more than £400m.

If the offers are accepted, the RAC's 12,000 full members could be in line for a payout of more than £30,000 each.

However, the spokesman said that the board would not put forward a proposal until it had finished consulting members.

The RAC, advised by Dresdner Kleinwort Benson, the in-

vestment bank, is considering a variety of ways of spinning off its motoring services division, leaving the organisation as a traditional private club. Options under consideration include a demerger, flotation or trade sale of the business.

The RAC's board last week sent a questionnaire to all its full members, canvassing their views. The forms ask whether members supported the idea of

demerging the motoring services arm, and invites them to support the board's attempts to come up with the right proposal. It is also planning to hold a series of seminars where members can air their views.

Earlier this month, the RAC ejected Jeffrey Rose, its former chairman, after he wrote to members without the board's knowledge to canvass support for a demerger.

STOCK MARKETS

Indices	Close	Wk's chg	Wk's chg %	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield %
FTSE 100	5822.20	-183.30	-3.00	6150.5	4331.5	3.487
FTSE 250	5519.30	-10.10	-0.18	5652.4	4384.2	3.979
FTSE 350	2847.80	-79.60	-2.49	2939.7	2114.6	3.391
FTSE All Share	2777.16	-67.09	-2.36	2881.12	2089.1	3.36
FTSE SmallCap	2623.70	-10.60	-0.40	2641.4	2182.1	2.882
FTSE Hedging	1406.70	-4.60	-0.33	1415.3	1225.2	2.265
FTSE AIM	1068.70	3.50	0.33	1085.7	865.9	1.077
Dow Jones	9167.77	183.32	1.82	9164.76	8617.26	1.581
Nikkei	15703.80	-777.32	-4.72	20810.79	13488.21	0.969
Hong Kong	11001.32	-340.70	-3.00	16820.31	7904.13	3.325
Dax	5288.75	-48.47	-0.91	5411.07	3325.01	1.339

INTEREST RATES

UK interest rates				US interest rates			
Term	Rate	Term	Rate	Term	Rate	Term	Rate
3 months	5.50	3 months	5.50	1 year	5.50	1 year	5.50
6 months	5.50	6 months	5.50	2 years	5.50	2 years	5.50
1 year	5.50	1 year	5.50	3 years	5.50	3 years	5.50
2 years	5.50	2 years	5.50	4 years	5.50	4 years	5.50
3 years	5.50	3 years	5.50	5 years	5.50	5 years	5.50
4 years	5.50	4 years	5.50	6 years	5.50	6 years	5.50
5 years	5.50	5 years	5.50	7 years	5.50	7 years	5.50
6 years	5.50	6 years	5.50	8 years	5.50	8 years	5.50
7 years	5.50	7 years	5.50	9 years	5.50	9 years	5.50
8 years	5.50	8 years	5.50	10 years	5.50	10 years	5.50
9 years	5.50	9 years	5.50	11 years	5.50	11 years	5.50
10 years	5.50	10 years	5.50	12 years	5.50	12 years	5.50

CURRENCIES

Currency	Rate	Wk's chg	Wk's chg %	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield %
£/\$	1.6842	+1.17c	+0.07	1.6302	1.5688	5.50
£/DM	1.9078	-1.23c	-0.06	1.7135	1.6100	5.50
£/¥	221.99	+12.14	+5.47	205.93	181.78	5.50
£/₹	107.70	+0.40	+0.37	104.00	105.90	5.50
£/₹	13.82	-0.77	-5.57	16.97	11.40	5.50
£/₹	307.75	-0.09	-0.03	342.56	160.30	5.50
£/₹	6.28	-0.13	-2.08	6.46	5.50	5.50

TOURIST RATES

Country	Rate	Wk's chg	Wk's chg %	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield %
Australia (\$)	2.5026					
Austria (schilling)	20.83					
Belgium (franc)	61.22					
Canada (\$)	2.3652					
Cyprus (pound)	0.8633					
Denmark (krone)	11.87					
Finland (markka)	9.0728					
France (franc)	9.5943					
Germany (mark)	2.9756					
Greece (drachma)	512.75					
Hong Kong (\$)	1272					
Ireland (pound)	1.1743					
India (rupee)	61.77					
Israel (shekel)	5.8156					
Italy (lira)	2945					
Japan (yen)	220.86					
Malaysia (ringgit)	8.0227					
Mexico (peso)	0.6401					
Morocco (dirham)	12.89					
Netherlands (guilder)	3.3379					
New Zealand (\$)	2.9172					
Norway (krone)	12.36					
Portugal (escudo)	301.76					
Saudi Arabia (rials)	6.1686					
Singapore (\$)	2.5682					
Spain (peseta)	251.35					
South Africa (rand)	8.2174					
Sweden (krone)	12.80					
Switzerland (franc)	2.4795					
Thailand (baht)	58.63					
Turkey (lira)	402.025					
USA (\$)	1.8536					

Rates for information purposes only
Source: Thomson Cook



GAVIN DAVIES

ON A STILL-PRESSING
SOCIAL ISSUE, AND
WHY TRYING TO
GOVERN BY NUMBERS
WOULD NOT WORK

Should ministers set a poverty target?

POVERTY ceased to be a topic that was much discussed in the 1980s, which was rather odd, since there was much more of it about. During the post-war economic consensus, which ended in 1979, the eradication of poverty was universally accepted as a legitimate goal of government, and a great deal of progress was made, with the slum clearance programmes and the expansion of the welfare state. However, the onset of the Thatcher government brought a different approach, emphasising an attack on the "dependency culture", a belief in "trickle down" economics, and eventually a denial that equity was a proper concern of government.

The question now is how far the New Labour government will choose to differ from the Thatcher poverty doctrine. This question is urgent, since if the natural order of things is allowed to persist, the incidence of poverty will probably continue to grow.

Poverty is not quite the same thing as inequality. Inequality can increase if the top end of the income scale benefits at the expense of the middle, but that will have no effect on the number of people living below the poverty line. Nevertheless, in order to calculate the incidence of poverty, we need to think in relative rather than absolute terms - after all, people who would have been considered absolutely rich in 1945 would be viewed as relatively poor today. The usual definition of the poverty line is half of average income, adjusted for family size, tax payments and benefit receipts.

Professor David Piachaud of the LSE has just published the accompanying table in *New Economy*, which shows how rapidly poverty has grown since 1979. The number of individuals in poverty more

than doubled from 4.4 million in 1979 to 10.3 million in 1995, and a phenomenal 25 per cent of British children are now living below the poverty line.

Obviously, this was not an intended result of government policy, so why did it happen? Professor Piachaud identifies four main groups which drove the increase. First, the rise in unemployment increased the poverty total by 1.4 million. Second, the explosion in the number of lone parent families contributed another 1.4 million to the total. Third, the growth of the elderly population, along with the decision to uprate pensions only in line with prices, added 0.8 million. Fourth, the low rates of increase in unskilled wages meant that single earner couples became much more prone to poverty, contributing 0.6 million to the rise. No doubt all of these factors were hugely influenced by deeper macro-economic forces - such as technical change, globalisation and the need to bring inflation under control - but the passive stance of government policy probably also played some part.

Professor Piachaud also attempts the more speculative task of forecasting how the poverty total might change in the next five years. There is good news and bad news. The arrival of the New Deal and the minimum wage may together reduce the poverty total by up to 0.7 million, while demographic trends will imply a much smaller rate of increase than we have seen recently in pensioners and lone parent families. But the likelihood that social security upratings will continue to be in line with prices rather than earnings will further reduce the relative income of those on benefits, and this alone will raise the poverty total by 1.5 million. Overall, depending on the behaviour of unemploy-

ment, Professor Piachaud reckons that the poverty count is likely to rise by between 0.3 million and 2.0 million in the next five years. Although this outlook may have been improved by the measures in the 1998 Budget, it is still a depressing prospect.

What can be done about it? Obviously, many of the forces at work are outside the Government's control, and the rest will be the subject of years of hard graft as the tax and benefit system is reformed. New Labour essentially believes that poverty can only be tackled, without making the dependency culture worse, by making it possible for a much greater segment of the population to enter gainful employment. This is probably true, but to many this approach looks insufficient. There are still powerful pressures for generalised increases in benefit levels, but these tend to be dismissed as "Old Labour" by the Government. More interesting is a new proposal by Professor Tony Atkinson, also in *New Economy*, that the Government should set a formal poverty target to focus its efforts in this area.

Professor Atkinson argues that a na-

tional poverty target should be seen as a first cousin to the inflation target which the Treasury gives to the Bank of England each year. After all, he says, if the Government is willing to accept a massive hostage to fortune on the question of inflation, why should it not do so in an equally important field, the eradication of poverty? A reasonable target, Professor Atkinson believes, would be the elimination of poverty by 2015, when children born today become adults. Once the target had been set, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) would be charged with producing an annual Poverty Report which would focus public attention on the topic, much as the Bank of England's quarterly reports do on inflation. And the ONS would also comment on which recent policy developments had or had not helped to reduce poverty. By increasing the political penalty for ignoring the behaviour of poverty, such a target would encourage a determined government attack on the problem over many years.

Although it is easy to agree with Professor Atkinson that a formal poverty tar-

get would radically change the behaviour of government through time, not all of the effects of this would be benign. Like any other target, excessive attention might be paid to those people who happened to lie within the poverty definition, at the expense of ignoring the claims of equally deserving people who fell outside the official definition. As Professor Atkinson recognises, this is a serious issue, since the objectives of social policy are much broader than the eradication of poverty - for example, to insure against income losses in the case of disability or unemployment.

But a more general disadvantage with a poverty target is that it would raise the question of why we do not have targets for other similar social objectives - public health, homelessness, a clean environment, road accidents, unemployment, life expectancy and the like. If targets were set for all such objectives, the task of government would quite quickly become impossible as one objective bumped up against another. Indeed, it is the essential job of government to juggle these objectives against each other in the most flexible way possible.

So why is inflation different? It is different, at least in the view of current economic orthodoxy, precisely because inflation is not connected to other objectives like unemployment and inequality. Since an inflation target does not bump up against these other objectives, it is possible to set an inflation target without implying that this somehow takes precedence over the government's other vital concerns. In the Budget Red Book, the Treasury took the unusual step of committing itself in general terms to the reduction of poverty and inequality, but that is probably as far as it is sensible to go in this area.

Growth of poverty 1979 to 1995

	Number of individuals, millions		Proportion in poverty, %		Number of individuals in poverty, millions	
	1979	1995	1979	1995	1979	1995
Elderly	7.9	10.0	19	23	1.5	2.3
Lone parent family (unemployed)	2.3	4.8	18	27	0.4	1.3
	1.4	3.4	16	24	0.2	0.8
Young	11.3	7.3	9	12	1.0	0.9
All types	54.8	57.5	18	23	10.0	10.4
Of which children	13.3	13.3	18	23	2.4	3.1

* 1 full time worker, 1 not working

Source: David Pleschard, New Economic March 1996

* 1 full time worker, 1 not working

Source: David Piachaud, *New Economy*, March 1998

Liffe board meets to discuss flotation

THE BOARD of London's troubled financial futures and options exchange (Liffe) meets this week to discuss its ownership structure. Liffe is mutually owned by its traders, although the management is considering a range of options for change, including full demutualisation and possibly flotation. The board's ownership proposals will be put to a membership vote next month, as will plans to introduce electronic trading. The proposed changes are part of an attempt by Liffe to claw back market share from the Deutsche Terminbörse, the German futures exchange.

BA to hire 15,000

BRITISH AIRWAYS is to create 15,000 jobs over the next three years, and hopes to fill 7,000 of these within 12 months. Of the 7,000 new jobs, 3,400 are expected to be cabin crew positions, 2,100 in customer services and 1,100 in telephone sales. All the new jobs will be in the UK, and most will be at Gatwick and Heathrow. But BA, which cut 1,500 jobs last year, is still expected to shed 3,000 staff by the end of this year.

Pension complaints soar

THE Personal Investment Authority ombudsman received a record 7,000 complaints in the last tax year about pensions, bonds and other investments, an increase of 43 per cent. The ombudsman expects complaints to rise by almost 30 per cent in the current year to 9,000. Fifteen extra case officers have been employed to try to avoid a backlog of complaints.

Tomkins in £18m buy-out

AKINS, the diversified industrial group, has sold one of its panies to a four-man management team in a £18m buy-out. Resources is one of the UK's top IT companies and is based in Woking, Surrey. Ray Cross, the company's managing director, was "looking forward with enthusiasm to running the company as a stand-alone business". He added the company hoped to create more employees as business developed.

M to seek listing

he 12-year-old computer group, is to seek a listing on the London Stock Exchange. It said the funds raised from flotation "be used primarily to develop the business organically and to finance future acquisitions".

Big stores' style and choice kills shoe shops

By Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

NEARLY 4,000 specialist shoe shops have closed since 1990 and more closures are likely as consumers increasingly choose to buy their footwear in clothing stores. A report today by Verdict, the retail consultants, says that specialist footwear retailers have lost 17 percentage points of market share in the last seven years, worth about £800m of "lost" sales.

The main beneficiaries are larger multiples such as Marks & Spencer, Next and River Island, which are offering more choice and style.

The report warns that despite the closures, the remaining specialists do not seem to be improving their performance.

Part of their problem is that the specialists have historically been manufacturing-led and tried to "push" their factories' output through their stores. The report says that approach has led to them missing out on several trends including trainers, a lack of innovation and bland uninteresting shops with indistinguishable merchandise.

The report says that clothing retailers such as M&S and Next are able to display shoes with complete outfits which boosts sales. Without any manufacturing plant of their own they are able to source products from anywhere in the world to meet changing fashions.

According to Verdict, consumer spending on footwear grew by 7 per cent to £4.7bn last year. But sales through specialist outlets fell by 0.1 per cent.

IMF admits Korea errors

THE International Monetary Fund (IMF) has admitted it underestimated the vulnerability of the South Korean economy to growing difficulties in its financial sector.

An internal IMF paper summarising a meeting of IMF executive directors held last month said "the Fund's ability to identify emerging tensions at an early stage had been mixed".

The paper went on to say that, in the case of Korea, "The Fund had not attached sufficient urgency to the financial tensions that had begun developing in early 1997... With hindsight it was clear that the vulnerability of the economy and the risk of financial distress spilling over into the external sector had been underestimated."

The IMF has arranged a \$60bn (£36bn) rescue package for Korea.

Tiger troubles risk 120,000 UK jobs

By Les Paterson

MORE THAN 120,000 UK jobs could be at risk if there is a collapse in direct investment from the troubled Far Eastern economies, according to the preliminary results of a new study.

A number of high profile

projects, such as the £425m investment in north-eastern England by Samsung, the Korean giant, have already been put on hold following economic turmoil in the "tiger economies".

If Far Eastern direct investment were to dry up altogether, that could cost as many as 70,000 new jobs in Wales over the next

10 years, 30,000 in Scotland and 20,000 in Northern Ireland, according to a study by Business Strategies, a forecasting company.

Jobs in the North-east - another region which has historically benefited from Far Eastern direct investment - could also be threatened, ac-

According to Melanie Lansbury, senior economist at Business Strategies, Ms Lansbury added that the projections were a "worst case scenario".

Although a slowdown in Far Eastern direct investment would jeopardise jobs in certain UK regions, other areas could benefit, albeit indirectly. Ms

Lansbury explained: "Other regions which have not succeeded in attracting a large share of foreign direct investment in the past - like the North-west, Yorkshire and Humberside - could benefit as domestic firms move to take up the slack left by the slowdown in Far Eastern investment."

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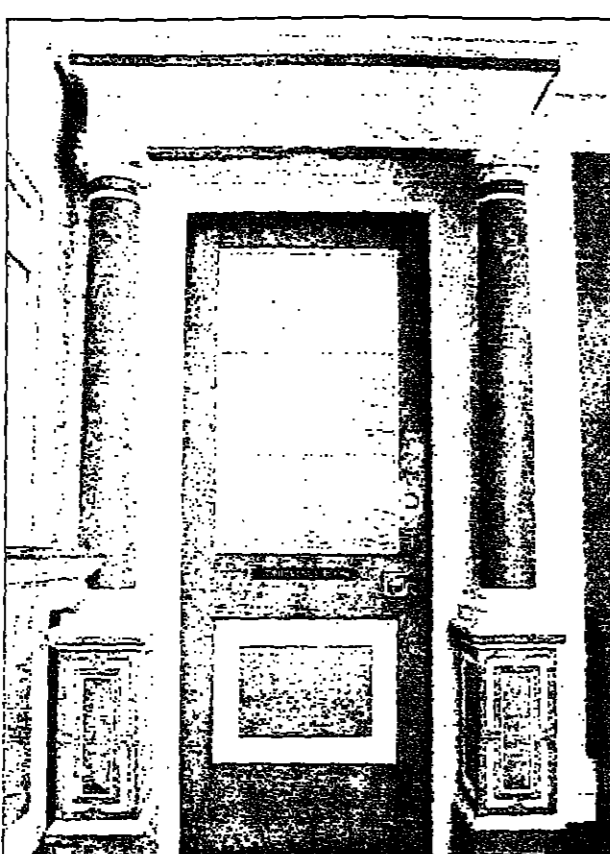
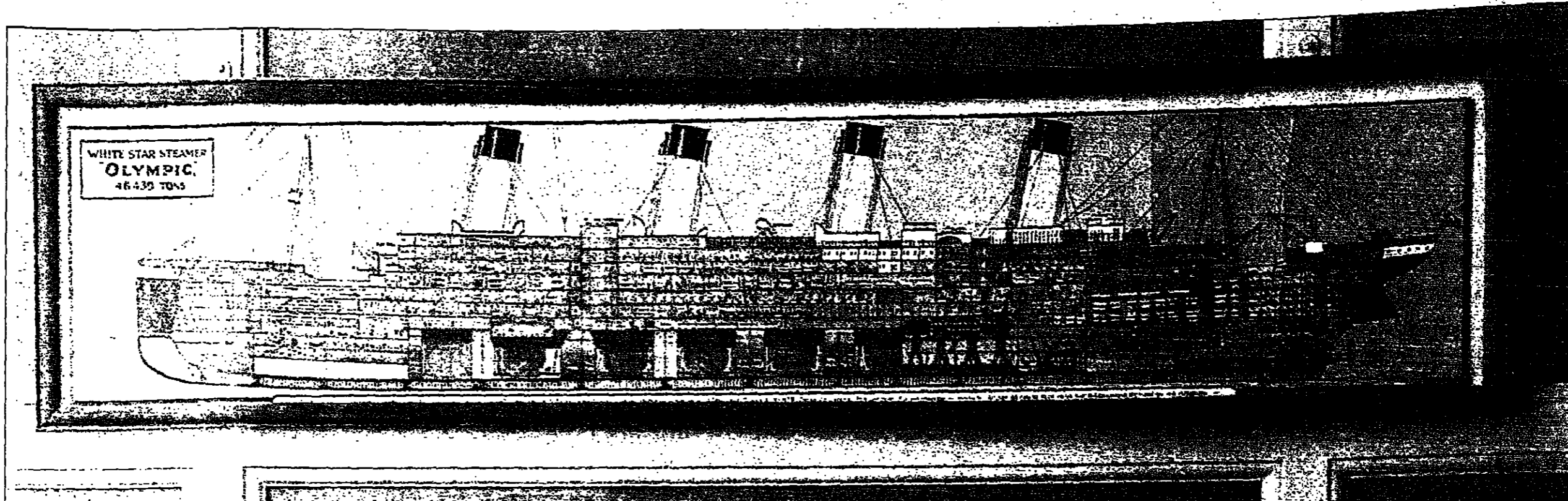
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The office that boasts 'Titanic' style



Doomed liner's sister ship keeps memories afloat of a bygone age

By Steve Boggan

IF YOU hate that sinking feeling when you go into work on Monday mornings, spare a thought for the staff of Alzo Nobel – their offices are decked out like the *Titanic*.

Grand panelling, light fittings, a beautiful domed ceiling and even a staircase are identical to those on board the ship when she sank in 1912 after being holed by an iceberg.

In fact, the fittings at the Northumberland factory – which makes Crown Paints – came from the *Titanic's* sister ship, *Olympic*, but they are identical in every detail to the doomed liner's.

They were bought at auction in 1935 for just £800 when the *Olympic* was decommissioned after 24 years at sea and more

than 200 Atlantic crossings. When she first set sail, a year before the *Titanic*, the *Olympic* was the most luxurious liner afloat. Today, her fixtures make the Alzo Nobel offices just as luxurious. Wood panelling from the ship's second-class corridors and entrance hall can be found in the company's conference room and along a staircase, from the second-class deck.

In the staff canteen, workers enjoy their lunch under the reconstructed ceiling of the first-class smoking room. When they leave, they pass through the doors that once led to the first-class entrance and staircase.

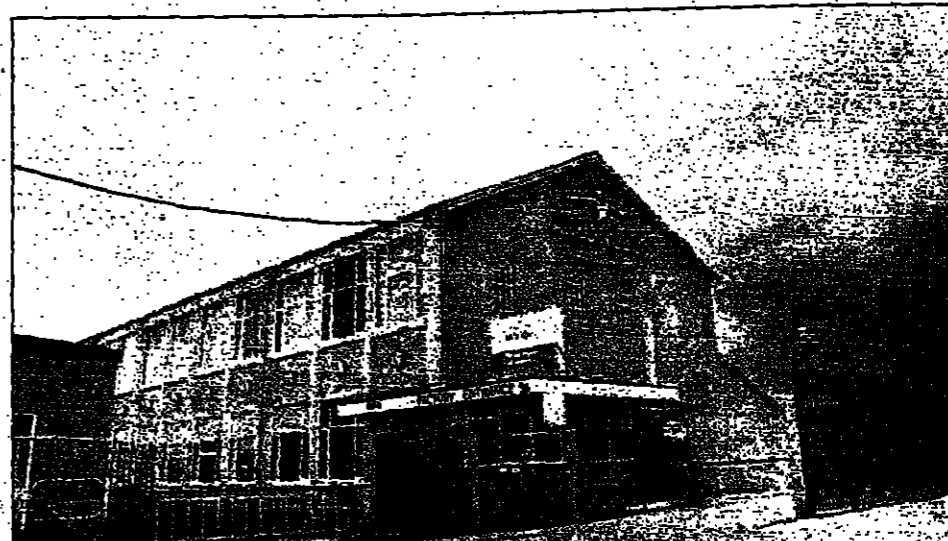
"It makes a lovely place to work but I think that most of us had taken it all for granted," said Susan Fearon, the administration manager. "Then, when the film *Titanic* came out, people

would go and start to recognise bits of furniture or windows or panelling and you would see them stopping in the corridors and looking around a bit more than they usually would, realising how lucky we are."

A researcher for the film visited the factory at Haltwhistle two years ago to ensure the authenticity of the set. Seeing much of their surroundings in the film has been a thrill for many of the company's 200 staff, but there has been a downside.

"The problem is, you try to watch the film and follow the love story, but you just keep recognising a bit of your office in the background," Ms Fearon said. "And then you can't actually concentrate on what's going on in the film."

Well, worse things happen at sea.



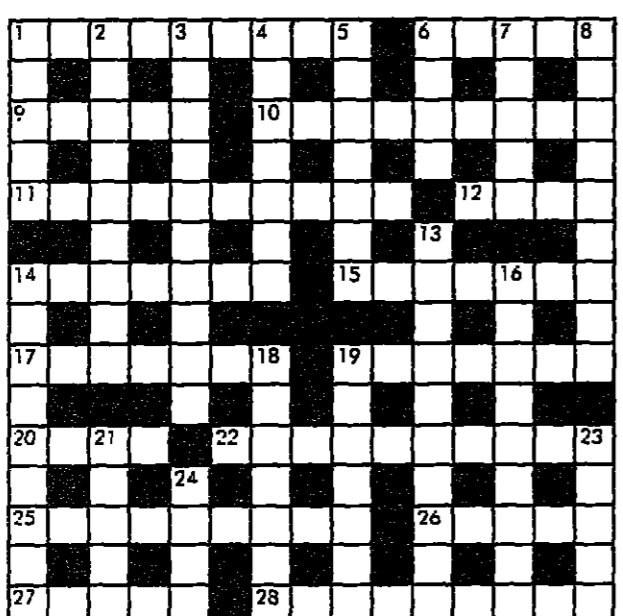
Shipshape: A plan of RMS Olympic, main picture top, sister ship to the *Titanic*, hanging in the Alzo Nobel offices at Haltwhistle, Northumberland, above. The fittings – bought at auction in 1935 when the liner was decommissioned for just £800 – add luxury to the paint plant including staircases, doors (left), ceilings (below) and light fittings. Memorabilia from the liner (bottom) also includes a plaque commemorating the ship's history and details of its layout

Photographs: Michael Scott

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3589, Monday 20 April

By Porfir

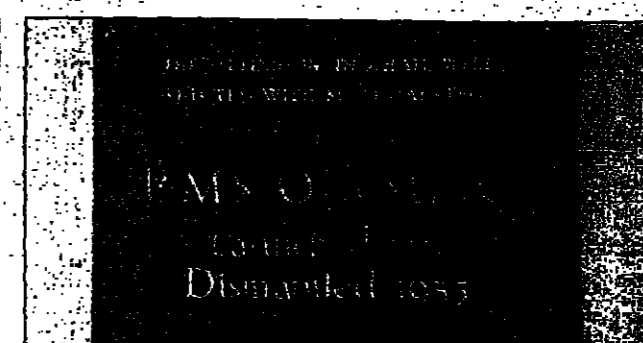
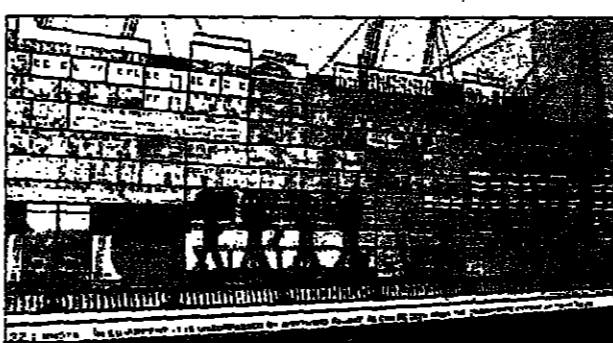


- ACROSS**
- 1 Fool about with politically correct European (1,5,3)
 - 6 Ring family by midnight (5)
 - 9 Put off cleaner when man's away (5)
 - 10 Part of a hook plate I get re-designed (5,4)
 - 11 Positive uproar surrounding soldier's promotion (10)
 - 12 Driver's association (4)
 - 14 Bend to get a grip (7)
 - 15 Set free chained creature (7)
 - 17 Article by girl is about royal principality (7)
 - 19 It may be tied round straw (3,4)
 - 20 Shot seabird by the sound of it (4)
 - 22 Approach atomic worker who's not far away (4,2,4)
 - 25 Verse written about late, eccentric artist (9)

- 26 European flatfish is excellent in short (5)
 - 27 Still tense on occasion (5)
 - 28 Really, from that time count on joining (9)
- DOWN**
- 1 Make sense of total increase (3,2)
 - 2 Imminent state of exposure (2,3,4)
 - 3 The Girl Of The Golden West? (5,5)
 - 4 Race in circles before crew reach Turk (7)
 - 5 Understanding French style (7)
 - 6 Cook's inside getting quiche fixed (4)
 - 7 Take advantage of a disguise, say (5)
 - 8 Agreed by Rex to sack old chap (9)
 - 13 Point to badly affected firm in Kent (10)
 - 14 Grief feeling long after (9)
 - 16 Exaggerate the importance of media's art review (9)
 - 18 Experts set out to discover Sicilian how man (7)
 - 19 Talk repeatedly about being cut by old spear (7)
 - 21 Foreign princess extended quarters (5)
 - 22 Play with Dutch partner (5)
 - 24 Society crowd's allotted place (4)

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